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256 c. 16482

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THE
PEASANT
OF
ARDENNE FOREST:
A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By Mrs. PARSONS,
AUTHOR OF
ANECDOTES OF TWO WELL-KNOWN FAMILIES
THE MISER, THE VALLEY OF ST. GOTHARD,
AN OLD FRIEND WITH A NEW FACE,
WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE,
MYSTERIOUS WARNING, &c.

"Hereditary honour in worldly estimation is accounted the most noble; but reason and sound judgment speaketh in favour of him who hath acquired distinction by his *merit*; for 'tis *virtue*, and not *birth*, which maketh men truly noble:—And poor is his boast, who is compelled to *borrow* his claims to respect from a long list of titled ancestors."

VOL. III.

BRENTFORD:

PRINTED BY AND FOR P. NORBURY;
AND SOLD BY
T. HURST, No. 32, PATERNOSTER ROW;
J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY;
CARPENTER AND CO. OLD-BOND-STREET;
AND DIDIER AND TIBBETT, ST. JAMES'S-STREET, LONDON.

1801.



THE
PEASANT
OF
ARDEENNE FOREST.

CHAP. XVII.

DOUGLAS had learnt from the physician the unwearied attendance and affectionate care Lewis had shewn to him through the whole progress of his disorder; and though he was wild, dissipated, thoughtless, and volatile, he possessed good-nature, and felt most gratefully those kindnesses, to which he was conscious he had but very little claims, from the general

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tenor

tenor of his conduct towards Lewis. He was also informed how little obligation on the score of attention he owed to his associates, or his quondam valet; a sick bed was not their sphere for action!—They had pretty well done for the thoughtless Douglas, and whether he lived or died, little more could be got from him, unless he came into possession of his uncle's fortune; but this was a remote contingency, and the arrival of fresh company at Florence gave them hopes of a present harvest.

As for De Preux, the advantages he had derived from Douglas, openly, as well as privately, and the partnership he had entered into with the two Italians, who equally disgraced their country and their birth, made him perfectly indifferent in whatever manner their intimacy should terminate. He had both feared and hated Lewis, whose integrity was a reproach to himself;—he had sought to entangle him
and

and render him unhappy through the medium of Caroline, and had artfully made her the dupe of his schemes. He had watched their interviews, and had, under the seal of secrecy, communicated his suspicions to young Frosini, the girl's brother, who was fiery, impetuous, and revengeful.

He had come to his mother's house purposely to have an interview with Lewis;—it so happened by the chapter of accidents, that he met De Preux, and accompanied him into the garden to hear further information, and by the low murmur of voices, one evidently in grief, they were directed to the spot where they found Lewis and his unhappy companion. This was an event so much beyond the hopes of De Preux, that the subsequent conversation, and the promise given by Lewis, sufficiently gratified his revenge—as such a marriage would inevitably prove a bar to his future advancement in any shape whatever.

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The depravity of this man, who could coolly plan the ruin of two inoffensive young people who had never injured him, is a melancholy instance, that being well-born, is not of itself a barrier against the debasement of the mind; much must depend on principle, and proper pride—that pride that can suit itself to its situation in life, without being humbled into a flatterer, or degraded into an abjectness that seeks pecuniary advantages at the expence of honour and integrity. De Preux had forfeited all pretensions to the title of a gentleman when he ceased to respect himself. A king may confer titles, a man may be descended from an ancient and respectable family, but if in his own conduct he is abject and base, he sinks himself beneath the lowest born peasant who preserves his integrity and nobleness of mind. In speaking of De Preux we include those dissolute and unprincipled young men with whom he was connected, and who were
running

running precipitately towards a gulph of infamy, that must shortly cover them with shame and indelible disgrace.

But to return to Lewis. Douglas having learnt the extent of his obligations to him, was shocked at the alteration in his person, which he attributed to the fatigue and confinement with him; and when he reflected on the dissipation, extravagance, and ruinous irregularities he had been drawn into by those who deserted him on a sick bed, and by a vile, shameless woman, who had plundered and then abandoned him — when a retrospection placed before him the whole tenor of his conduct in a dispassionate point of view, contrasted with the behaviour, the integrity, the resolution of Lewis, and the unmerited kindness he had shewn to him, he was shocked at himself, and felt the warmest sense of gratitude to his young friend.

B 3

In

In this sentiment Lewis found him, and the expressions of Douglas were proportionate to his feelings. But when to his acknowledgments, he joined such praises of his rectitude and propriety of conduct as he appeared to deserve, Lewis shrank abashed from the approbation he could not enjoy; for nothing can be more painful and oppressive to a feeling mind, than receiving praise when conscious of its being unmerited. "Spare me, spare me, Mr. Douglas!" cried the poor heart-stricken youth, "I am no ways entitled to these commendations; I have been a guilty, weak mortal, and deserve reproach and reprobation. Could my errors be concealed from you, many reasons would keep me silent, but they are known to De Preux, no doubt to his friends, and from them I know too well what I may expect, therefore hear my confession, despise me, but do not blame an artless, unhappy girl."

He

He then briefly acquainted Douglas with the unfortunate affair we have already related, execrated his own weakness and ill conduct, but warmly insisted on the innocence and unguarded tenderness of Caroline, who, he was persuaded, was as free from vice, as from duplicity; and in that conviction, he had determined to marry her—though by so doing, he must lose all prospect of those flattering expectations, raised and nourished by his venerable friend, whose good opinion he could no longer lay any claim to.

Douglas heard this relation with very different emotions;—the latitude of his principles made him regard what Lewis deemed an unpardonable crime, as a very venial sin; since he had no deception, or premeditated ill design to charge himself with. And the folly of an imprudent love-sick girl he thought ought to fall upon her own head. But when after this conclusion he recol-

B 4

lected

lected the schemes that had been formed by De Preux, which he now blushed to have known, and silently acquiesced in, for drawing those young people into the snare, that had so fatally entangled them, he began to view the sacrifice of Lewis in a new light;—that he was the victim of a base design, to make him contemptible and unhappy, merely because the integrity of his conduct was a reproach to their dissolute manners. The mind and body weakened by disease and reflection, Douglas could not support his self-upbraiding conscience. Tears gushed from his eyes,—pressing the hand of Lewis,—“ I,” said he, “ am more guilty than you; an infernal plan was laid to draw *you* into error, *I* knew it, and tho’ I did not encourage it, I took no steps to frustrate, or guard you against it.—My conduct has been infamous, and I deservedly suffer;—but you ought not to have been sacrificed to the detestable passions of envy and malice,—to the vile arts of duplicity.—

city.—For I am convinced De Preux was the instrument of your destruction, and had prepared the brother of this poor girl to surprise you.” This confession of Douglas, which cost him great exertion from his extreme weakness, astonished and greatly irritated Lewis against De Preux and his companions. Though very much hurt at the insincerity and unkindness of his friend,—he believed him to be already too great a sufferer by his imprudent confidence in those bad men, and his connexion with an abandoned woman, to bear any additional weight of vexation by reproaches or remonstrance at that time. He therefore contented himself by letting the whole of his resentment fall upon those unprincipled men who had wantonly undone his peace, and his own weakness which had made him their dupe.

“ When you censure your own imbecility,” returned Douglas, “ you will perhaps

B 5

he

be but little inclined to forgive mine; yet I must enquire after the ungrateful, cruel Eleanora." "Think not of her," replied Lewis, "she is the most infamous of women." He then proceeded to relate the insolence and intrepidity with which she had appeared in public as mistress to the Austrian nobleman, and her departure from Florence, in his suite, or rather as the Empress of the Party. Douglas could not hear this without some sighs; for though his mind had undergone a great change, and his principles were very much altered, his strong infatuation to this woman could not be entirely eradicated.—Her departure gave a pang to his heart, but he struggled to repress his feelings, and dropped the subject. In the course of that evening De Preux made a formal "How d'ye," the coldness with which he was answered, and the surprising convalescence of Douglas, assured him things were nearly arrived at their crisis;—that he and his companions

nions were pretty well known, and therefore that they had better resign their intimacy with the *English boy*, (as they contemptuously termed him,) than wait to be *dismissed*.

Turning upon his heel with an air, and a shrug of indifference and contempt,—“I shall very possibly not see you again for some time, as my friends and myself are pretty much engaged;—but you cannot be in better hands than with the prudent Mr. Berthier.—And a female friend of his will make a most delightful trio.”

Lewis rose hastily from his chair,—Douglas exclaimed, “Stop, oh stop,”—he instantly obeyed, repressed his rage, and turning to his friend, saw he was gasping for breath.—He had nearly fainted, and was some time before he recovered. But when his strength and spirits returned, indignation and resentment enabled him to overcome

overcome all other feelings, and he rejoiced to be at once so cheaply rid of that connexion.

The following day two letters were delivered to Lewis;—one from Frosini, demanding the fulfilment of his engagement with his sister,—the other from Caroline, which we shall transcribe that we may do her artless affection justice.

“ My brother, intending to be cruel, has been my kindest friend. He placed me in a convent where I have been taught to know the full extent of my unintentional crime;—and the folly of expecting happiness with you, who are so well acquainted with my weakness that you can never esteem me. Dear, dear Lewis, do not hate or despise me, I will not now be your wife, though a short time since I would have endured the worst of tortures to have had that title.—Indeed I am not a bad,
or

or a vicious girl, neither are you in any shape deceitful or to blame.—I was weak, and you but too tenderly compassionate.—I am sure, though both were guilty, both were innocent of such an intention, therefore dear, dear Lewis, I acquit you with all my heart.—You will pity me, I know you will, but you shall not hate me, so I will not be your wife.

“ I like the convent, I am resolved to remain here ;—my mother never cared much about me, and will soon forget me.—My brother is hot headed, but I shall write to him and make all things easy.—I could die to see *you* once more, but I never will ;—I shall soon be easy, and very happy here, I have two cousins, nuns, they are happy, why should not I? As your wife I never could look you in the face without shame. Now you will pity and bestow a sigh upon the too affectionate Caroline, who bids you farewell
for

for ever! Nobody will be admitted to see me, do not therefore expose yourself to come here, to disturb my quiet to no purpose whatever. May the holy virgin protect you.

CAROLINE."

This simple letter from Caroline was truly wounding to the feelings of Lewis, and did more to strengthen his resolution to marry her than all the interference of her brother could have done. He went immediately to the mother, produced the letter, at the same time requesting she would exert her authority and take her from the convent;—but this woman, after a torrent of reproaches, refused to take any such step as he required.—The truth is, she was perfectly indifferent about the girl, whom she considered as an incumbrance, being not only avaricious, but of a light turn of mind, that made a tall daughter no desirable object to her.

Had

Had Lewis been possessed of any property his request would have been directly complied with, but no advantages could be derived by a marriage with him, and the most unpardonable thing in her daughter's conduct, in her opinion, was, being seduced into error by a *poor paltry dependent*,—for *this* she execrated, abused, and renounced her.—A rich man, with splendid offers, might have thrown a veil over her loss of innocence; but the crime of being a victim to the weakness of her heart, without any interested views, was a most abominable fault, and never to be forgiven.

Lewis bore her upbraidings with self-conviction that they were deserved; but he defended the unfortunate Caroline, with an honest warmth of heart, and expressed the most earnest desire to preserve her from the melancholy gloom of a cloyster, and to make her his wife. “I have nothing, it is true,” answered he, when she reproached him

him with his poverty, “but I will exert every power of body and mind to support the dear girl and restore her peace.”

In vain he pleaded and promised,—his poverty was an insuperable bar, tho’ she pretended the crime of Caroline deservedly shut her from the world;—and that she, inflexibly virtuous, could never endure the guilty creature in her sight again. Finding he only drew upon himself, and the poor girl, the most bitter abuse, and cruel insults, he withdrew, and wrote to the brother.

But already had Caroline enforced her wishes to him, with such reasons for her conduct, explaining at the same time the circumstances of Lewis, and the impossibility of his providing for her,—and also generously taking the whole blame upon herself, and exculpating him from any seductive arts, or intention of injuring her,—that her letter had staggered his resolution
and

and weakened his resentment ; and when the application came from Lewis, both pride and justice obliged him to confess the young man acted with honour and kindness. After some reflection, therefore, he approved of Caroline's intention, and replied, to the request of Lewis for his interference, " that Caroline and him must settle it how they would, he renounced all connexion with either."

We shall only add, that after repeated letters, and many fruitless endeavours to be admitted to speak with her, he found she steadily persevered in her resolution, and he was compelled to accede to her earnest request, " that she might no more be disturbed by unavailing applications, as all his letters would be returned unopened ;—but, that her prayers for his success and happiness should never be omitted."

Thus

Thus the poor affectionate Caroline, whose heart was virtuous, and whose conduct through life might have been proper and respectable, was made a victim to the insidious arts of De Preux, who, by falsehoods imposed on her simplicity, flattered and encreased her love, by being told that it was reciprocally returned;—and this cruel purpose was contrived, merely to gratify his hatred of a worthy young man, whose virtues were a reproach to his own meanness and bad propensities,—and in whose heart he planted a thorn that was painfully felt to the last moment of his existence.

During this negotiation between Lewis and the parties, which took up some days, Douglas slowly proceeded to a convalescent state; but his constitution was very much impaired. The irregularity of his life, both before and after he left England, at so early an age, had extremely injured him, and

and left him but little strength to struggle against so violent an attack as had lately seized upon him, when the agitations of his mind and the weakness of his body sank under the conflict of his passions.— That he recovered from the fever was scarcely expected, and the extreme debility that hung upon him at first caused no serious apprehensions of any fatal effects, therefore, as his illness had not been communicated to his father, under an idea that the event must be decided before any letter could reach his hands, Lewis had foreborne to write on the subject at all, and Douglas not being very punctual in his correspondence, they did not fear any uneasiness would arise on that score.

Lewis now understood that his letters to and from Father Francis had been intercepted, for Douglas, with shame and contrition, had acknowledged, he had passively permitted this unpardonable action in De Preux,

Preux, for which he could hardly hope to be forgiven. But the other, too sensible of *his own weakness* against any strong temptation, or in competition with the arts of such an unprincipled man, readily forgave his repentant friend, while it increased the fury and resentment he harboured against De Preux and his companions.

His first care was to write to his reverend benefactor, and now it was that he felt more poignantly than ever, the errors he had committed. To Father Francis he had been accustomed to open every sentiment of his heart, to give an unreserved account of every occurrence, and to communicate every thought of an unadulterated mind.—This link of confidence was now broken. He was no longer the innocent ingenuous Lewis, the deserved protégée of a worthy man who rested on his integrity and honour!—In how short a time had he forgotten the lessons of wisdom and goodness,

ness,—how easily had he fallen under the first temptation to do evil!—He must now be guarded in his expressions,—must have concealments that lacerated his heart;—for duplicity of any kind he held in abhorrence, and to be compelled to withhold an entire confidence in the good father, seemed an act of the vilest ingratitude. His letter, therefore, was short, confused, and uncircumstantial.—He was obliged to mention the baseness of De Preux, which he knew would hurt the good man extremely,—also the illness of Douglas,—but all he related was in a manner and in language so constrained, that he was exceedingly dissatisfied with his letter, and foresaw that the good man would be not less so,—but it must go.

A few days after this, one evening, when a deep melancholy had oppressed him the whole day, and Douglas had urged him to take a short walk in the air, Lewis strolled
towards

towards one of those beautiful hills that surround the city, and ascended it to view the enchanting scenery. He had thrown himself on the ground, and in spite of his unpleasant meditations found his senses agreeably engaged by the variety and richness of the prospects. At a small distance from him, on the side of the hill, was a most charming little villa, the grounds round it highly cultivated, but in a style that differed much from the Italian taste, and rendered it remarkable from all others within his view.

He had lain some time admiring it, when he saw a gate opened, and two ladies come forth, advancing up the hill on which he rested. One seemed to be about forty, of a very noble air, and an elegant figure, with a face where sorrow appeared to cloud a lovely and interesting countenance.—Her companion was much younger, not so tall or elegant, but a genteel person and a pleasing

pleasing face. She was earnestly talking to the elder lady, who appeared very inattentive, and walked slowly on.

The spot on which Lewis lay had given him a full view of the ladies, but the trees and shrubs had concealed him from their sight, until turning to the right hand, round some trees, before he was aware of their proximity, they came close upon him. Both parties started, he sprang from the ground, and bowing respectfully, apologized as well as he could in the Italian language, for the sudden surprise. The ladies bowed in return to his compliment and walked on without speaking, though they turned more than once and looked back at him, who was rivetted to the spot; for in the interesting face of the tall lady, he had noticed the most perfect resemblance of Hermine, allowing for the difference in age, and the blooming complexion of the latter.

Surprised,

Surprised, delighted, and struck as if by the force of lightning, he remained immovable on the spot. He would have given the world to have known who and what they were—a likeness so dear, so sacred to his memory, gave him a transport beyond all description.—“ Oh! what happiness, could he form an acquaintance with this charming lady!” To follow them would be intrusive and impertinent, but he could not think of returning home without one view more of that charming resemblance, which had agitated his heart with the most lively emotions of equal pleasure, pain, and regret.

He walked slowly down the hill towards the plantations round the villa, without losing sight of the gate through which they were to return. Whilst loitering there a man servant came out looking round as if in search of the ladies. Lewis, grown bold by curiosity, made up to him,
“ Friend,”

“Friend,” said he, in bad Italian, “if you are seeking the two ladies that came from hence, they have walked up the hill to the right.”

The man shook his head, he did not understand him. Lewis then addressed him in French, upon which the other thanked him in the same language. “I presume those ladies are not Italians,” returned he, joining the man. “No,” replied he, stopping, as if he did not relish an unknown intruder, “they are English ladies.” Lewis stopped too,—“English ladies, and reside in Florence!” The man looked displeased,—“It can be nothing to you, Sir, I suppose, who they are.”

“Don’t be offended,” replied Lewis, ingenuously, “if I confess that I am a little curious; for the elder of the ladies so perfectly resembles a beautiful young lady for whom I have the highest respect,

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that

that I cannot repress a wish to know if your lady has any relations in France."

"Of that," answered the servant, more civilly, "I cannot inform you. My lady's name is Somerset, Lady Somerset; she is a widow, and has buried a son and a daughter within these three years, which is the reason she wears mourning, and is in a poor state of health. A year and a half ago she came to Paris, and was advised by the physicians to travel into Italy. She then sent back all her English servants except her own woman and the young lady her companion, and hired me and another to attend her into Italy. She had been, I understood, in France above six months, so she may have relations there for ought I know, I never heard. And so we have travelled the country, till about eight months since, when coming here, this villa was to be let, an English nobleman having lived in it, but is now returned
to

to his own country, so my lady took it, for how long I can't say; but I think she is much better in health, though her spirits are but poorly yet. And this is all I can tell you, Sir; and now I must hasten after my lady."

The talkative Frenchman, who when once he began, chattered like a magpie, having thought it high time to attend his lady, scampered off with all possible speed, leaving Lewis not much informed, though his curiosity was in some points gratified. The mystery that enveloped Hermine, with the strong likeness of this Lady Somerset to her, and as he now seemed to recollect, also to her father, rendered it very possible they might be related though the lady was English; and he continued to walk and ruminate until he saw the ladies returning. Ashamed of an unwarrantable intrusion, he walked off from the house towards the bottom of the hill, frequently looking

round till he saw them enter, and the gate closed.

It was near dusk when he descended into the valley and pursued his way to the town. Just by a gate-way he perceived two gentlemen who were coming towards him; he could not discern their persons until they were close upon him, when to his surprise he was accosted by a loud laugh, and a seizure of his arm—it was the Count Benito and De Preux. They had sooner discovered him.—“Well, my young philosopher,” said the former, “may we wish you joy?” “Ah! Monsieur Lewis, the forester,” cried De Preux, “how does your lady do, the kind Caroline?”

“Unhand me,” said Lewis, indignantly, “I wish to have no further acquaintance with men who have treated Mr. Douglas with so much baseness and ingratitude.—
And

And you, Sir," addressing himself to De Preux, "by whose vile contrivances an amiable girl is made wretched, and by whom I have been irreparably injured, how dare you face me with this insolence? —I am unprovided with any weapon, or you should not escape me with impunity."

He had scarcely pronounced the last word, before he was knocked down, and received a stab with a stiletto; and doubtless would that instant have been deprived of life, but a voice crying, hold, and a person running towards them, caused them to retreat and leave their intended outrage unfinished. The man who advanced, proved to be the servant belonging to the ladies, whom Lewis had spoken to, and in his zeal to examine him whether dead or alive, had omitted to observe the assassins, or which road they took. Lewis was senseless, and the blood pouring from his wound, which the man stopped as well as

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he

he could; and then ran through the gate for more assistance. He quickly returned with two others, and with difficulty the still breathless Lewis was conveyed to a house, and a surgeon sent for.

The servant told to whom he belonged, and the ill-usage he had seen, having no doubt but had he not opportunely appeared and cried out, they intended to murder the poor gentleman. "Intended to murder him! why I am afraid he is pretty well done for as it is," said the surgeon, just arrived, "however let us see what we can do." Several strong stimulatives being applied to his nose, he began to shew signs of life; and on examining the wound it was found to be only a flesh one, and tho' given with a hearty good will, had not endangered any of the vital parts.

The surgical operation completely restored his senses—he looked round and
asked

asked where he was. His eyes fell upon the servant, whom he recollected immediately weak as he seemed—he cried out feebly, “You with me, you! then where am I?” The man readily told him of his opportune interference; adding, that he had been sent after him by his lady, to whom he had repeated the curiosity, and the motive for it, which Lewis had expressed.—“My lady wishes to see you, but that can’t be at present.” “No,” said Lewis, faintly, “my head, my head is very bad.”

Busy in searching the wound, the blow on his head had passed unnoticed; the surgeon now found it was extremely bruised, and grew very much alarmed for the consequence — happily, however, his hat had broken the violence of the blow, and no concussion of the brain, as the surgeon apprehended, had taken place.

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The

The moment Lewis could speak coherently, he desired a messenger might be sent to Douglas, who had only been twice out an airing since his dangerous illness; but he insisted upon being taken to Lewis, and very poignantly felt the cruel treatment he had met with from those cowardly wretches.

An enquiry was set on foot after them, but they had left Florence to avoid an investigation they did not choose to encounter; and also because some late exploits on an English nobleman began to be talked of, not much to their credit. But De Preux took care to leave his annuity bond from Douglas, in such hands as he knew would enforce the payment of it, previous to another scene of action. In a few days Lewis was carried in a kind of litter to his own lodgings. The man to whose timely appearance he owed his life, Douglas handsomely rewarded; and he came daily, by order

order of his lady, to enquire after the invalid, expressing her wish to see him when he could venture abroad. Caroline, the *too affectionate* Caroline, had also been informed of his narrow escape from death, and frequently sent to know of his health; and expressed her unbounded joy and thanks to the holy virgin for his preservation.

Those continued marks of her attachment gave Lewis the most sensible pleasure, and a concomitant pain. Pleasure that she still interested herself for his welfare, consequently did not regard him as base and ungrateful;—and pain, that such an innocent, affectionate heart should thro' his blamable conduct, be cut off from society, and buried in a convent.

In a much shorter time than could be expected, Lewis grew convalescent; but he was much grieved to observe very alarming symptoms in Douglas, that denoted an

increased weakness in his general state of health, and seemed rapidly undermining his constitution. Greatly distressed he consulted the physicians, and they frankly confessed they were apprehensive of a pulmonary consumption; and though he might possibly drag on life some months, *perhaps* a year or two, yet their hopes were very small of a recovery!

Shocked beyond description at this most alarming information, he wrote without delay to acquaint the elder Mr. Douglas of his son's recent illness, and tedious progressive recovery. One of the medical gentlemen with great candour recommended a return to his native air;—a slow journey, and change of climate and objects; he thought might possibly be of some service. This Lewis mentioned, and impatiently waited the result from England.

At

At this time also he received a very affectionate letter from Father Francis, who much grieved at his long silence, now exonerated him from all blame, but professed himself greatly shocked at the baseness of De Preux, from whose infamy he drew many pious reflections to teach Lewis the beauty and benefit of truth and candour, and the unpardonable sin, as well as contemptible meanness of vice and duplicity. After many more admonitions, much pious advice, and the most fervent prayers, for his success in this world, and eternal felicity in the next, he concluded with saying, that the young and worthy orphan, the respectable Hermine, was perfectly in health, content in her situation, and her best wishes were offered for peace and happiness to her friend Lewis.

He was sorry to add that she had received letters from her young favourite Fidelia, which had given her a great deal of disturbance.

disturbance. He feared that young lady was not happy in her return to the world, and regretted the peaceful asylum she had been prevailed upon to forego, for tumultuary scenes, and not accordant with her inclinations. The good man had also written to Douglas, but as the contents of his letter were pretty similar to the other, 'tis unnecessary to repeat them.

Whilst Lewis impatiently waited for letters from England, and his anxiety for Douglas daily encreased; he advanced rapidly in his own health, and was at length permitted to go out. This permission so ardently desired, he resolved to avail himself of, by waiting upon Lady Somerset; and having prevailed upon an acquaintance to pass the intermediate time of his absence with Douglas, he set out for the villa of that lady, his heart beating with a variety of emotions,—hope, fear, curiosity, suspense, and an anxious expectation,

tion, that in some shape or other, this visit might concern Hermine.

On his arrival, Etienne, the servant who had frequently called on him, and who had been handsomely rewarded both by Douglas and Lewis, expressed much pleasure on seeing him; and conducting him to an anti-chamber, went to announce him to his lady.

He presently returned with orders for his introduction, and Lewis with no small trepidation, was ushered into a very elegant library, where both ladies were sitting; the younger one at work, the other with a book in her hand, which she laid aside, as she rose to receive her visitor.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.



LEWIS, struck with the dignity of her figure, and more so by the resemblance nearest to his heart, made his bow with an air of respect and deference that attracted the attention of both ladies. Having requested he would take a chair, Lady Somerset proceeded,—“ You will have the goodness, Sir, to excuse the liberty I have taken, in soliciting this visit; but the questions you asked my servant, and a certain resemblance you noticed in me, to a young lady of your acquaintance, has also excited my

my curiosity, and I shall feel extremely indebted to you, to inform me who the lady is, her name, and circumstances?"

"Neither of which, Madam," replied he, "can I give you the least information of.—The young lady I alluded to, is at present in a convent, in the Forest of Ardenne, in the Province of Luxemburgh. The only name she is known by is *Hermine*—" "*Hermine!*" repeated Lady Somerset, much agitated, "pray, Sir, go on, I am really deeply interested.—How comes it that her family name is unknown?" "I know not," returned Lewis, embarrassed, "how far I am at liberty to relate those circumstances that procured me the honour of being known to *Mademoiselle Hermine*."—"O, pray do not hesitate, Sir, I pledge you my sacred honour, that not a word or circumstance you wish to conceal shall ever escape my lips.—I am, indeed, uncommonly desirous of what information

formation you can give me,—for the very mystery is what interests me, and not alone from female curiosity, but from certain causes, known only to myself.”

The young lady arose, “I am going into the gardens, Madam.”—“Do so, my dear Charlotte,” returned Lady Somerset, and the door being closed, she again turned her imploring eyes on Lewis.—He could not withstand the persuasive language:—“Relying confidently on your honour, Madam, I shall repeat to you all I know relative to this young lady, feeling it impossible to refuse *you* any satisfaction, since every word and look reminds me more strongly of the charming Mademoiselle Hermine.”—Lady Somerset smiled, but whether that smile proceeded from self-love in the “*charming*” resemblance, or from the warmth with which Lewis uttered the epithet, we cannot exactly ascertain, but her ladyship was a woman,—why then might

might she not be gratified by an implied compliment.

Lewis, however, did not notice it, but gave a very exact and circumstantial detail of every circumstance. The lady appeared more and more agitated as he proceeded, but when he mentioned the initials on the coffin of Hermine's father, she clasped her hands and exclaimed, "I am no longer in doubt,—Gracious Heaven, what a discovery!—But go on, Sir.—Alas, poor Count, punishment soon followed conviction!"—The word Count caused a tremor in the voice of Lewis,—“Ah!” thought he, “she is then a *Count's* daughter!”—After a moment's hesitation he resumed his narrative, which he brought down to the last letter from Father Francis; but carefully avoided every thing relative to Douglas and himself, more than his humble birth and occupation, from whence he was taken by the partiality of the good Father, to accompany

company Mr. Douglas, whose ill state of health would, in all probability, soon recall him to his native country and friends.

“Well, Sir,” said Lady Somerset, “I told you that I was influenced by something more than female curiosity, and you will credit me, when I assure you that I have very strong reasons to believe, your *charming* Mademoiselle Hermine is my niece.” “Is it possible?” exclaimed Lewis, in a transport of joy. “I think it more than possible, I believe it highly probable, nay, almost certain,” answered she, “and the services you and your family have rendered to her, and her unhappy father, entitle you to demand a reciprocal confidence from me, to what I have drawn you to place in my honour.” “No, Madam,” returned Lewis, modestly, “I have no such right; birth and fortune has placed you at an immeasurable distance from me, and I am not presumptuous enough to break the barrier.—

barrier.—Allow me only to say, that no temptations whatever, could have induced me to relate what I have done, but the strong resemblance, that grows upon me every moment, between your Ladyship and the Lady Hermine.” “And allow me, in return, to assure you,” said she, “that the modesty and propriety of your sentiments entitle you to consideration, had you no claims on the score of gratitude, and therefore attend to my confidential communication.” He bowed, and after a little pause she proceeded as follows:—

The story of Lady Somerset.

“My father, the Marquis De Melian, lost his wife soon after the birth of my younger sister; and having been passionately fond of her, the shocking and sudden event would in all probability have cut short the thread of his life, but for the tenderness he felt for his two motherless girls.—I was two years old at the death
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of my mother, and being what is called a forward child, by little infantine playfulness, and a great deal of prattle, irresistibly engaged his attention, and amused his mind.

“ The lenient hand of time, and his strong attachment to his children insensibly meliorated his grief;—we possessed his undivided heart, and engaged every thought and wish of that best, and most affectionate of parents. All the advantages of education that fortune could procure, were our’s ;—every kindness, every indulgence, and the first preceptors in every science, that was customary for females to be acquainted with.

“ Our juvenile years, until I was twelve, and my sister ten years old, passed rapidly away, winged with delight, and without a cloud to impede our mutual happiness.—At that period my father was appointed
envoy

envoy at a foreign court, and we were both placed in a convent till his return. I shall pass over the painful separation, and the subsequent five years of his absence. Our lives in the convent resembled a calm, unruffled sea, and youth too sanguine in its hopes, looked forward to a continued serenity, without apprehension of the many storms and tempests we are all liable to encounter with in the wide ocean of life.

“ Our emancipation from a tranquil, though confined situation, was welcomed by us only from the joy we should receive in again residing with our beloved parent. His transports were unbounded, and in a very few days we found additional pleasures crowding fast upon us, from the company we were introduced to, and the amusements we were suffered to partake with a few chosen friends. Lord Somerset, an English nobleman, in whose praise, and of whose virtues I could dwell with delight for
hours,

hours, was at that time in Paris, and almost from the first of my introduction into company, evinced a decided partiality in my favour. He had known my father at Vienna; who respected him greatly, and having given him a general invitation, he might be said almost to live in the house.

“ I shall not be prolix on this subject, a mutual affection between his Lordship and myself was soon visible to my father and all our connexions, and after my Lord had with peculiar delicacy, sought for and obtained my permission, he applied for my father's consent. Only one objection could possibly be started, the difference in our faith.

“ To my father, at first, this appeared an insuperable obstacle; but though educated so long in the convent, and the tenets of the catholic religion impressed incessantly on my mind, I take shame to
myself

myself when I confess, that this objection faded in my mind to nothing when placed in competition with all powerful love, which had possession of my whole heart. Lord Somerset was truly amiable and good, and though only eight-and-twenty, he had a decided character—his honour and integrity were unimpeachable, his reputation abroad stood high with all who knew him; and though perfectly satisfied with his own mode of faith, he equally esteemed and venerated those that were good and worthy in every country, and of every religion.

“ With such a man, so liberal in his opinions, so respectable in his conduct and character, my father could have no doubt of his child’s temporal happiness; but it was her eternal welfare he was anxious for, and many of our friends, with more bigotry and less philanthropy than Lord Somerset, insisted that my salvation would be endangered if I married an heretic.—

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In short, I endured much persecution from them, and the most affectionate solicitude, and weighty arguments from my father;— I was afflicted, but my heart was immovably fixed, and my reliance on Lord Somerset's tenderness and honour could not be shaken by superstitious violence, or uncharitable conjectures.

“ My lord assured my father that he would never interfere in my religious duties—he was well acquainted with the ambassador from our court to his country, and that the minister's chaplain should always attend me upon every occasion.— At length my father's objections gave way to the reasonable propositions of his lordship, and his anxiety for my peace, which he perceived hung upon his consent.

“ We were married, and for many years with him, I was the happiest of human beings.

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“ We remained in France four months after our marriage, and were earnestly desirous that my father and sister should accompany us to England; but my father was detained by his attendance on the court, and he could not be prevailed upon to part with his dear Hermine. (Lewis started at the name.) With considerable reluctance on all sides we separated, in the hope however of being re-united the following year.

“ How short sighted is human wisdom, when depending on remote contingencies which a hundred accidents may impede from ever taking effect!—We earnestly and anxiously, month after month, anticipated the time when we should see our beloved relatives. The spring was now advancing, I was in the family way, and fervently wished for my dear sister to be with me. I perceived, or thought I had perceived, in her two or three last letters,

a constrained style, and a dejected turn of expression that pained me; but such perfect confidence had ever subsisted between us, that I checked the idea as much as possible, trusting that she would have no concealments from me, unless my father was out of health. No sooner did this thought obtrude, than I grew so extremely uneasy, that I could no longer refrain from communicating to her my observations and my fears, conjuring her to relieve my mind, or at any rate to satisfy my doubts, and be perfectly unreserved in her reply.

“ Her letter, so eagerly wished for, arrived—it was long and explanatory. She confessed she was strongly and unchangeably attached to a young nobleman, to whom our father had a decided dislike, from an erroneous opinion he had been led to entertain of his principles. She allowed that *he had* been gay, dissipated, and extravagant; but then he had been put in possession

possession of his fortune at a very early age, and enticed into company, and the follies of the age, by a set of young men of equal rank, and more hackneyed in the ways of vice—but he was now become sensible of his errors, despised his former follies, shunned his unprincipled companions, and, since he became attached to her, he was totally changed in his conduct and principles.

“ In short, for love is a great qualifier, she was convinced that his heart was good; and that now he was become a proselyte to reason and decorum, it was equally cruel and uncharitable to reprobate him for what *he had been*. Her father, she added, continued inflexible, at the same time his obduracy seemed to have so much tenderness for her happiness mixed with it, and he treated her in every other respect with such unabated fondness, that her heart was half broken in the conflict between duty

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and paternal love, and her strong attachment to so amiable a man as the Count ****, whose name, to copy the prudent reserve of Hermine, you will excuse me from mentioning.

“What could *I* say in answer to this letter, when the facility with which I had bestowed *my heart*, though happily on a worthy man, might in some shape be pleaded as an example to my younger sister?—I consulted my lord, he wrote immediately to Paris, to friends on whose judgment and integrity he could firmly rely. The answer confirmed our worst fears.—The gentleman in question, was allowed to have rank, abilities, a fine person, polished manners, and the most insinuating address; but he was gay, unprincipled, shamelessly attached to women and play, had thrown away a handsome paternal fortune, encumbered his estate—and ’twas feared his very abandoned propensities

pensities were too deeply rooted, for any young woman to risk her chance of happiness on the slender hope of a reformation, where the mind seemed so extremely vitiated that it might without a breach of charity, be supposed—habit was become a second nature. They concluded with saying, that though Mademoiselle De Melian was as beautiful as an angel, and love might have a great share in his addresses, yet from his libertine character, and pecuniary wants, they were apt to believe the great fortune she was joint heiress to was his principal inducement to think of marriage.

“ This terrible account, from veracity and unquestioned honour, you must suppose shocked us greatly; and my lord’s advice to copy the letter, without naming our informant, and send it to our dear Hermine, I instantly complied with, entreating her to break off the connexion;—as

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that could only occasion a *temporary* pain, and would be more than overpaid hereafter, when judgment should supersede passion, and the pleasure of having obliged her friends would more than compensate for the sacrifice of an unworthy man. We were a fortnight beyond the usual returns of the post before any letter came, and I was exceedingly uneasy. We had pressed her to come to us with all speed; and had urged the same request to our father, without assigning any cause for such urgency but my situation.

“ At length the long expected letter came—it was from my father. The agonising contents I cannot repeat—’tis sufficient to say, that a week previous to the date, the young, rash, and ill-advised Hermine, had forsaken the house of her father, and married the unworthy Count. His affliction and disappointment was proportionate to his love and apprehensions for
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the happiness of a beloved daughter; but the marriage was concluded, and what could not be recalled, for her sake, he was willing to forgive—he had therefore written to invite them home, in the hope that under his roof, and newly married, the fairest chance offered for reclaiming a volatile, dissipated young man, if his heart was not totally depraved.

“ Further, he requested we would be gentle in our admonitions to her, and give *him* more credit than he deserved; in the hope that a generous reliance on his principles, if he had any feeling, would influence him to justify our favourable judgment, and deserve our confidence. Such was the letter from the tenderest of all fathers, and we strictly observed the very spirit of his wishes.

“ My Lord most kindly condescended to write and invite the new married pair to
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England, in which invitation I joined most heartily. Alas! how great was my disappointment — a cold, freezing letter of thanks, with an apology of a previous engagement, which would prevent them from seeing England for that summer, and a few kind words and good wishes on a particular event, written and signed by my sister, were the only return made to our voluntary kindness.

“ We soon after heard from my father, they had declined living with him, and began an establishment of their own. A moiety of a handsome sum left by our maternal grandfather between us, to be paid on the day of marriage, or when we arrived at one-and-twenty, my father was obliged to pay into the Count's hands; to which he added something considerable, but not in the same proportion that he had given to me—assigning as his reason, *to us*, that he should wait, to judge impartially
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of the Count's apparent reformation, before he placed unlimited confidence in him.

“ A very short time enabled me to form my *judgment*; for the formal coldness of my poor Hermine's letters assured me, that he had been made acquainted with the character I had transmitted to her, and that by this marriage I had lost the affection and confidence of my sister, thro' the unjustifiable resentment of her husband.

“ He must be conscious that the picture had not been overcharged, and that both love and duty demanded from me a faithful representation, *previous* to her marriage. If his reformation was sincere, his love for her, such as it ought to have been, he would have valued me for the affection I had shewn to her;—and our subsequent invitation must have convinced him how dear her happiness was to us. On the contrary he never wrote a second letter,

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and her's were so seldom, and so frigid, that every one I received made me quite miserable; and gave to my dear Lord the utmost inquietude.

“ Nothing material occurred till after I was brought to bed of my eldest, now alas, my only son; soon after which I had the supreme felicity of being pressed to the bosom of my beloved parent. But how changed was his person! thin, pale, and dejected;—I was shocked at the alteration, —I enquired of his health,—“ He was well, very well,” he said, but his looks, and the tone of his voice contradicted that assertion. I asked of my sister, “ Ah, poor Hertmine !” returned he, “ she is no longer the same blooming cherub that enlivened every social party;—she is seen nowhere, declines all company, asserts that a retired life is her choice, and even before me has borne the entreaties of her husband to go into public, and his *seeming* anger,

anger, when she persisted in refusing.— Yet I am well assured from a private hand, that she pines in solitude, and acts by his imperious commands, a farce, to deceive me and the world, at the expence of truth and her own feelings.

“ I dare not interfere,” added my father, brushing off the tear that stole down his cheek, “ for I have questioned her once in private, and the only time I ever had an opportunity, she assured me, “ That she was absolutely mistress of her own time and actions, and was surprised that I should doubt it.”

“ What could I say after that? I gently hinted indeed, that the Count appeared falling into his old habits of company and expence. She cut me very short, “ He was accountable to no one for his actions; and whilst she had nothing to complain of, she hoped her dear father would not encourage:

courage ill-natured informants, or repeat things tending to hurt her peace."

"In pronouncing the last words," continued my father, "the unbidden tear trembled in her eye, she tenderly pressed my hand, and framed an excuse to leave the room for a few minutes to recover herself. You may guess what were *my feelings*, but she soon returned, and evidently with forced cheerfulness, changed the subject.

"A near relation of the Count's has been some time with them on a visit; he is young and handsome, but I do not like him.—I am by no means a physiognomist, or apt to form rash judgment on a slight acquaintance, but there is a dark trait in that man's countenance that alarms and disgusts me;—a lowering, down-cast eye, a studied glance, and an affected gentleness of manners that does not sit easy on him.

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Had the Count not married, he is heir to his title and estates;—the latter were deeply mortgaged, I have assisted to clear them, and obtained a jointure on one of them for my dear Hermine.—If she has no son, this Chevalier Soissons succeeds to them;—she is now, I believe, in the family way,—this Chevalier I do not like.”

“Such was my dear father’s account of my poor sister, and knowing how tenderly he loved her, I was no longer surprised at the alteration in his person from a disturbed mind. My feelings instantly caught the alarm from his, I had no doubt but my sister had married a tyrant, and a libertine; I saw he was only kept within bounds in the hope of sharing the remainder of my father’s fortune at his death. This I hinted to him, and besought him to take good care of his Hermine.

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“ On that head,” said he, “ I wish to consult your worthy Lord, and shall be determined by his advice. You were ever both equal in my affection, and both have an equal right to my fortune; but though I have given the Count what is very handsome, I did not give him what I should have done, had he been like Lord Somerset, the object of my esteem, as well as of your choice. However of this more another day.”

“ We exerted our best endeavours to amuse our dear father, and he certainly in about ten days recovered from that pallid dejectedness which hung on him when he came to London. We went down to our house in Gloucestershire, with which he was highly charmed; but more so in an excursion through Wales, where the grand picturesque views, and the bold romantic wildness of the country, astonished and delighted him..

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“ Four months we enjoyed the inexpressible pleasure of contributing to the peace and amusement of a dearly beloved parent. Our domestic happiness, in some degree tranquillized his mind, and my dear Lord shared his heart equally with myself, as his virtues well deserved.

“ During this period he had two letters from my sister.—We all observed the same formal stiffness, the same studied expressions as I had been accustomed to receive; and though love and duty appeared to dictate, there was an inexpressible something we felt, but could not describe, of coldness and constraint, that pervaded every line.

“ Ah,” said my father, “ this is not the language of the heart, not the spontaneous effusion of that affection which glows in the bosom of a grateful, and affectionate child.—I am persuaded the Count dictates and directs every line.—Dear, unhappy child,

child, what a lot hast thou drawn in the great lottery of life!"

"We could say little to counteract the impression this conjecture made on his mind,—we could only endeavour to console him. But as he knew the time drew near when she expected to be in bed, he grew anxious to return before the winter set in, and very earnestly pressed us to accompany him.

"My Lord determined to see him safe landed in France, but I could not possibly consent to leave my infant, so young, to the care of domestics, neither could I possibly think of taking him with me; I was therefore obliged to postpone *my* visit till the following spring. Some time after we received the pleasing intelligence that my sister was happily delivered of a little girl, and both perfectly well;—the next letter informed us the child was named Hermine, and

and that the moment the Countess could leave her chamber, both she and the infant were removed, under pretence of change of air, to a chateau belonging to the Chevalier Soissons, on the skirts of the Forest of Orleans.

“ My father went there to visit her;— his description of her was such as exemplified the beautiful imagery drawn by one of our best English poets,

“ She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.”

“ She was still most lovely,” he said,
“ but the flush of health no longer adorned her cheek; her beautiful eyes had lost their brilliancy, but a soft languor and a gentle smile rendered her irresistibly touching,—for there was an evident endeavour to appear easy and content, whilst the feelings of the heart struggled to obtain utterance. What a tender, afflicting object was this to a father!

father! He entreated her confidence, "the world," he said, "pronounced her to be an ill-treated woman;—her husband, an abandoned profligate, and a dupe to the man in whose house he resides. It became a father's right to see justice done to his child.—If she was to live thus separated from her husband, *his house* was the most appropriate for her residence; and if the Count objected, he would even implore the interference of majesty to confirm a father's wishes, and do them both justice."

"As nearly as I can recollect," added Lady Somerset, "and almost every word, as well as every occurrence, relative to my dear, unfortunate Hermine, is engraven on my heart, this was her answer.

"My dearest father, you tear my very heart-strings by this overflow of tenderness, which convinces me that you are unhappy on my account, and are led away into erroneous

roneous conclusions by appearances, and the officious intelligence of false representations. Once for all, and I conjure you, *as you value my peace*, that this *may be the last time* the subject is ever mentioned between us,—I now once more assure you, that I have nothing to complain of.—My own choice,—my own free-will has directed every thing. Surely I may be allowed to judge what is most conducive to my inclination and my happiness. I prefer solitude,—this chateau, tho' ancient and out of repair, has a thousand charms for me, from its vicinity to the forest, where I like to walk. The delightful cares of a mother occupy much of my time, the Count comes to us whenever he can find leisure, and if he permits me the liberty to live as I like, surely he is entitled to the same privilege, and who shall presume to question the propriety of his conduct, if I am satisfied? My dear father," continued she, embracing him, "I beseech you to be
contented

contented and happy,—if 'your Hermine does not shine at court, nor live in the brilliant style in which you describe my dear and happy sister, remember, we have all different propensities in our nature, and as frail mortals, all subject to caprice and a change of sentiment.—Such is the case with me.—I now pursue a retired life, from choice,—I cannot answer whether I may hereafter change my taste or not, I make no resolutions, time and circumstances will determine for me.”

“ Such was the purport, I believe the exact words of her reply to my father, after which no further remonstrance could be made.

“ Soon after, it was publicly known that a lady resided with the Count. He declared she was a relation who condescended to superintend his domestic concerns during the absence of the Countess for the recovery

very of her health.—My sister confirmed this to my father,—her conduct, blind confidence, and strange infatuation astonished him.

“The Count paid him every mark of outward respect, and more than once lamented his wife’s unaccountable preference of the country;—wished her health and inclination would admit of her return to Paris, with many other apparent marks of affection, and regret for her absence.—But my father could not be deceived by his specious arts, the conduct of the man was contradictory to his professions, and he rated them accordingly, as attempts to deceive him into a good opinion of his affection for his daughter, and to throw the whole blame of consequences on her voluntary banishment from his house in town.

“In this way, without any change in my sister’s life, but encreased irregularity
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and dissipation in the Count's, matters proceeded for more than twelve months. My intended visit to my father was prevented by the advice of medical men, who judged an attempt to cross the sea might be attended with danger at that time. My sister now and then wrote to me, her expressions were more kind, but the contents of her letters were always on desultory subjects, or of her little Hermine, whom she seemed doatingly fond of.—Nothing of her husband, or domestic concerns, or return to Paris, tho' she allowed that her health was perfectly restored. This our father confirmed, and attributed the change in her countenance to the excessive delight she took in her child, who was her constant companion.

“ One day that my father was fondling of it, she said, with a peculiar point in her voice,—“ *I hope you will prove a father to my little Hermine.*—I may die,—the Count
may

may have another wife,—such things may be;—let me hope, therefore, my child will have a father in you,—that she may not be left motherless and unprovided for.”—
“God forbid,” answered he, much moved, “that she should be motherless for many, many years to come,—as for her provision, I have already taken care of that.”

“Have you?” exclaimed she, clasping her hands with energy, “then I am satisfied,—if my darling child will not be——” she stopped, as if conscious she had said too much,—my father read her thoughts. “Whenever it shall please Heaven to call me hence,” said he, “yourself, with Lord and Lady Somerset, will be her guardians. I will even make it the interest of the Count to educate her well, and preserve her life with care and tenderness.—Fear nothing for your child, my dear Hermine, both you and the sweet infant will be amply provided for.”

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“That assurance is sufficient,” said she, “and I cannot wish her better guardians than Lord and Lady Somerset,—and here,” added she, “we will drop the subject.”—And here also *I* must stop,” said Lady Somerset; “for I find myself extremely exhausted by talking so long, and must defer my conclusion till to-morrow, if you are sufficiently curious to favour me with another visit.”

Lewis made a suitable return to this compliment, and assured her Ladyship that he should be greatly honoured in being permitted to wait on her again.

“I beg,” said she, “that you will invite Mr. Douglas to accompany you to a family dinner to-morrow, without ceremony.—I am well acquainted with his family and connexions, and tho’ not in the habit of visiting his mother, I have met her frequently in parties, when I mixed
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with the world, and remember her as a very lovely woman. If he does me the favour I ask, we shall find an opportunity for the remainder of my narrative."

Lewis modestly expressed his acknowledgments for her condescension and confidence; and promised, that, at all events, *he* would have the honour to attend her the following day. They parted soon after, and he returned to Douglas, who he found with a very serious countenance resting his head on his hand, and an open letter before him on the table.

"I am glad you are come, Berthier," said he, in a melancholy voice, "read that letter, and judge for me whether I ought not to go immediately to England." To the surprise of Lewis, the letter was from Fidelia.—She informed him of the very sudden death of their mother by another paralytic seizure, which carried her off

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within

within twenty-four hours;—that their father was very sensibly affected by the unexpected shock, as she had been to all appearance getting better daily, and had to her expressed a wish that his son would shorten his tour—at the same time she was not *authorized* to tell him so.

This letter, which Lewis saw had been written previous to that he had sent off to Mr. Douglas, gave him very great concern, as the information he had forwarded relative to the state of his son's health, must have considerably added to his recent affliction. "Well, Sir," said he, when he had perused the letter, "what do you propose doing?"

"To leave the Continent with all the speed my weakness will admit of," answered Douglas. "And I hope the journey will restore me to health and strength; otherwise it would be but a sorry proof of my

my duty and affection, to add, by my appearance in the state I am in, to his present distress of mind."

"Possibly," returned Lewis, "in a post or two you will hear further, and be better enabled to travel." "The first I think no ways material to wait for, and the latter I believe is not likely to happen, for I am sure I gain no strength, therefore a journey by easy stages affords me the most promise; added to which, I am really impatient to go for England."

Lewis had nothing further to oppose against the journey; — but appearing thoughtful for a moment, Douglas said, "I hope no affair of consequence on your side will impede us, for do not believe that I will put *you* to the smallest inconvenience. If you have any important matters to determine on, be assured I will wait another week, however anxious I am to set

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off."

off." Lewis gratefully acknowledged this kind consideration; and then mentioned his visit to Lady Somerset, and her invitation to him for the next day.

"I am sorry I cannot avail myself of her polite attention," returned he, "but the death of my mother has given a great shock to my feelings, and makes me unfit for company; but I entreat *you* to go, and apologise for me.—Were we to continue some time longer in Florence, I should be very happy to be introduced to her Ladyship, but as it is, I must decline it, that I may not leave this city with regret, which now I heartily wish I had never seen."—Lewis, with a heart-felt sigh, re-echoed his words—he thought of poor Caroline, and execrated himself, and the wretches to whose schemes his folly had given effect.

Whilst both for a moment were lost in thought, a gentleman requested admission
to

to Mr. Douglas, and on being introduced, produced the notes he had given to Count Benito, and the bond for the annuity granted to De Preux;—the first he requested to be immediately discharged, and security given for the payment of the latter. Lewis, to whom this whole business was entirely unknown, was thunder-struck. Douglas cast on him a look wherein shame and vexation were equally blended. Turning to the gentleman,—“To take up these notes at this short notice is wholly out of my power, I expect remittances from England daily ——” “Remittances!” repeated the man, with an insolent air, “men of any pretensions to rank and fortune have always, ’tis to be supposed, credit with a banker in the place they reside.”

“Through my own folly, and the infamous delusions of those men who held these notes, I have most shamefully abused

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that credit; nor will I take up another pistole till I receive letters from England.”

“ Very well, I am answered on that head; care will be taken that you shall not go out of this house till you have discharged them, *that* you may rely on. The next thing is the annuity bond—what security can you name for the regular payment of that?”

Douglas, enraged, mortified, and confounded at this insolence, was just then unable to reply—Lewis, bursting with indignation, was yet doubtful whether he ought to interfere, when, at that critical moment, Providence sent them unexpected relief.—Father St. Pierre was announced and entered the room.

This good priest had received a letter from his brother, Father Francis, who had desired him to lose no time in waiting upon his young friends, as their letters of introduction

duction to him, had by some strange accident been lost or mislaid. Never was name so welcome to the ears of Lewis; he sprang forward to receive the priest, and caught his hand with an emotion that surprised the venerable man. Douglas knew not whether to rejoice or blush at his presence, under his present embarrassment. But while Lewis was announcing himself, and eagerly enquiring after his benefactor's health, the man who a moment before had been haughty and insolent, said, "You have company, I will not press you now, but call to-morrow."

He was leaving the room, when the father throwing his eyes strongly upon him, said, "Gentlemen, I hope you have no business or transactions with this man." "Not such as personally concern him," returned Lewis, placing his back to the door, "but he is employed by two worthless scoundrels on a very iniquitous affair."

“Let him pass,” said the priest, “but hark ye, friend, let me advise you to quit the city without delay, or I shall give such information as shall send you to the gallies.”

Lewis did not quit his position.—“He holds notes and bonds most infamously obtained.” “Stop then,” exclaimed the priest, “I demand those papers instantly; demur not;—*I* will be answerable for them, when they are properly claimed.—This moment give them up, or *you* shall remain here, and take the consequence.”

The wretch so daring, so impudent to Douglas, was equally abject and submissive to the priest; trembling he drew them from his pocket, and delivered them without a word. Father St. Pierre opened the door;—“Begone,” said he, “from this house and the city.”—“Tell your employers,” said Douglas, “that the money
I

I borrowed shall be left in my banker's hands for them;—but for any thing else I will not engage without proper advice.”

The man made but two steps from the door to the top of the stairs, and disappeared in an instant. “Be thankful to Providence, my sons, that I came here in a moment of such consequence to you;—whatever may be the nature of the transactions in which such a man as that is made the medium, I am persuaded your youth and inexperience run the hazard of being most egregiously duped. Unhappy indeed, at your age, thus to be thrown among strangers, without an experienced guide! My brother is overwhelmed with sorrow and shame, that through his weak confidence in a worthless character, you have been unwarily drawn into error.”

“*I have no one to blame,*” said Douglas, “*my errors began at a very early age;*

I had the weeds of vice springing up before I fell into the hands of bad men.—I was fashioned to the impression of every thing vile and contemptible. — But my friend, Berthier, has indeed been cruelly imposed upon.”

“ An acknowledgement of error, my son, is a great step towards amendment ;—that, with repentance and resolution will conquer your evil habits, and I trust strengthen your good intentions, so as to produce good fruits hereafter.”

“ I hardly breathe yet,” said Lewis, “ overwhelmed with astonishment, anguish, and resentment, by the insolent demands of *that man* ;—and so unexpectedly, so providentially relieved in the moment of terror and despair, I feel struck with wonder and reverence.”

“ Let

“ Let this event then teach you both never to despair ;—when involved in difficulties look with confidence towards Heaven. There are no evils to which the strength of man is not proportioned, if he, with a firm reliance on Providence, exerts the powers nature has given him, to deserve its protection by virtue and industry. As yet you are too young to have been taught wisdom in the school of adversity, or to have known much real affliction. The errors of youthful imprudence may be atoned for ;—’tis only vice persisted in, as age matures our understanding and experience, that is unpardonable and truly detestable ;—for then it is habit and choice, and small is the hope of amendment. . But enough on this subject, may I ask the nature of those engagements now in my possession ? ”

Douglas without hesitation, though not without taking much shame to himself,
gave.

gave a succinct account of every transaction in which he had been concerned.—The good priest was shocked.

“I am not surprised,” said he, “that at your age, and in the hands of such practised miscreants, you should be deceived, and robbed of your money—and the arts of a woman, like Eleanora, for I know her person, may well excuse subsequent transactions. ’Tis a difficult thing for youth to withstand the blandishments of vice, when they approach it in the allurements of beauty;—but now, sufferers as you are, both bodily and mentally, to fall again into error, would be inexcusable.—Let the past prove a Pharos to warn you henceforth from the quicksands of vice, and prove to you, that if we should wish for peace and happiness, we must seek it in the paths of truth and virtue.”

He

He then proceeded to tell them the fellow whom he had so fortunately detected, was a known and practised villain, who had narrowly escaped being put to death on a charge of robbery and assassination. That no one doubted of his guilt, having been before and since convicted of great enormities; yet want of sufficient proof had saved him from a fate he richly merited.

He expressed extreme surprise that his brother Francis had been so much imposed upon by the recommendation of De Preux, who must have been a consummate hypocrite, and a wily villain to have obtained such a character from a respectable quarter.

“ Yet,” said he, “ had he even justified that character, it was a most improper plan to send you on a tour to foreign countries without a gentleman of age,

age, honour, and respectability, to introduce you properly.—But I shall disgust you,” added he smiling, “with preaching and prosing, as you will call it;—so freely tell me what services I can render you.”

We fear our readers also have begun to yawn over the last pages for lack of incident;—we shall therefore put an end to this long chapter, and the good priest's visit together.

CHAP.

C H A P. XIX.



FATHER St. Pierre having undertaken through the medium of a friend to get their pecuniary obligations settled, which had escaped the mind of Douglas when he received his sister's letter, and was so earnest to leave Florence in a day or two, Lewis, pressed by his friend, made his visit the following morning to Lady Somerset. The apology he delivered from his friend, was deemed perfectly sufficient, and after a little desultory conversation, the young lady withdrew, and Lady Somerset resumed her narrative.

“ I

“ I think I broke off where my sister appeared to be perfectly happy in an assurance that her child was provided for.— My father added in his letter, that the Count still paid *him* the greatest respect— still expressed regrets at the unaccountable perseverance in his Lady to retire from society, and bury herself in the precincts of a forest; but such was her strong attachment to that chateau, that, to oblige her, he had prevailed upon his relation to part with it—and in purchasing it, he had consulted her gratification entirely.

“ Did not certain traits in his character, and the general tenor of his conduct in private, which I have taken pains to investigate,” added my father, “ render me doubtful of his sincerity, and fearful of his principles, and the style in which he lives, contradict his professions of attachment to his wife, *I might* be tempted to believe our dear Hermine the capricious mortal he describes:

describes: But, however he may deceive the world, he cannot impose upon me.— Yet, though my heart is lacerated, and my peace deeply hurt, her language, her assertions, and studied appearance of content, effectually preclude my interference.”

“ Nothing material took place till I was confined to my chamber by the birth of ——” Lady Somerset paused, as if to repress her feelings, and then resumed,— “ by the birth of a lovely, and much lamented daughter, whom it has pleased Heaven to recall to her native skies!—We received a letter from my father’s maitre de hotel, that his beloved master had for some days been seized with a lethargic attack, which began to wear a serious aspect; and he thought it his duty to write, as the Count **** was constantly in the house, and brought his Lady with him, but never would permit her to be alone with his master. She had, in his presence, expressed

pressed a wish to the Count that Lady Somerset might be sent for. "No," he answered, "it was perfectly unnecessary." "She made no reply; but a look she gave me," added the writer, "made me comprehend my duty."

"I had lain in but a fortnight, was weak, and not in a condition to leave my house, much less to cross the sea. My Lord would by no means hear of any such attempt on my part; but, for the first time from our happy marriage, he determined to go alone, much to my regret, and far from being pleasant to him. Very impatiently I waited for a letter—the situation of my beloved parent wrung my heart with sorrow; but I strove to reconcile my feelings to the duty and submission I owed to the almighty will of our Heavenly Father, and in some degree prepared my mind for the heavy blow that soon fell upon me.

"A

“ A letter, with a black seal, taught me what to expect. To dwell on what I felt at this event is unnecessary. My Lord found my dear father alive, and sensible, though he seldom spoke; but he no sooner heard my sister pronounce his name in a lively tone, than he opened his eyes, and repeated “ Somerset!”—My husband pressed his hand, he attempted to smile.—Somerset mentioned my situation and regrets. —“ She is good, bless her, bless her!”—“ And *me* also, my father!” cried the weeping Hermine, throwing herself at his feet. “ Yes, you, dear, dear Hermine, may the Almighty bless you also!” He presently closed his eyes, and relapsed into his former silence.

“ The Count was present, he seemed much agitated, was coldly polite to my Lord, who found by their conversation, that from the physician’s report, two days preceding, of my father’s danger, the Count
and

and his Lady had remained in the house. The physician came in, he felt his pulse,—“Life is at the lowest ebb, an encreased fluttering convinces me all will soon be over. Behold,” added he, “the closing scene of a good man, a christian!—What avails the pride of birth, of pomp and riches, in an hour like this?—All fades to nothing—virtue alone has majesty in death—goodness alone can smooth our passage to another world!” “You will disturb him,” stammered the Count, evidently discomposed by the physician’s observation.

“Father Lellaire, my father’s confessor, who had not long left the room, returned; and just as he reached the couch on which he lay, the doctor said, “All is over, that gentle sigh has wafted his soul to the mansions of the blessed!” Excuse me,” said Lady Somerset, “for being so minute—such scenes I have been but too familiar with, and love perhaps to dwell on them.
My

My Lord proceeded in his letter, which I shall abridge by hastening to the will, produced by the confessor, and witnessed by two noble friends and the physician.—The contents were these.—After mentioning the property he was possessed of, which justice and affection demanded should be equally divided between his equally beloved daughters, my share was left to me and my younger children,—making my Lord one of our trustees, and in case of my death and the children's before they came of age, my Lord was entitled to the whole.

“ To Hermine and her child, or younger children, supposing she should have a son to inherit the fortune of his father, was bequeathed the other moiety, in trust to Lord Somerset and a noble friend of my father's, for their sole and separate use. A specified sum was to be allowed annually for the education of the little Hermine, and a quarterly

quarterly sum to be paid to my sister,—the remainder of the interest money was to be paid to the Count, until each of the children, if more than one, arrived at the age of one-and-twenty, when they were entitled each to a certain sum, and the residue between them at the death of their mother;—but if there should be no other child than Hermine, and she should have the misfortune to lose her mother, he requested she might reside in a convent till she came of age, and then be placed under the protection of Lord Somerset and her aunt, if they survived.

“ It was also his request, that if Hermine should be the only child to inherit all her mother’s fortune, that she might never be acquainted with it before she was one-and-twenty, to prevent the pride and consequence which young people were oftentimes apt to assume from a knowledge of their large independence. Further,—at that age,

age, if single, she was at liberty to make her will, and the disposal of her fortune was in her own power, except a certain specified sum, which was to be unalienable, and, if she died without children, was to descend to my daughter or daughters, and their heirs in the female line."

"Such were the contents of the will,—my Lord added, "but no language could do justice to the rage and violence of the Count.—To find that he had only a life interest in the property till his children should come of age, and then to be deprived of it, was such a marked want of confidence, against the trust reposed in Lord Somerset, that he was outrageously insulting."

"My Lord respected the feelings of my sister too tenderly to resent the insolence of a disappointed man, who had, in his opinion, more than he deserved in the interest allowed to him, for my father died
immensely

immensely rich,—infinitely more so than we had any idea of, as he was above making a parade of his fortune, and his benevolence and charity was known only to his confessor, to whom he left a handsome legacy, and a yearly sum to be distributed as usual to his pensioners. My poor sister was exceedingly hurt at the behaviour of her husband, and grateful for my Lord's forbearance.

“ In a day or two the Count's violence abated—a cold contempt marked his anger and envy, of which no notice was taken. My Lord was assiduous in expediting business, that he might return to me;—and to avoid any cause for offence, knowing how earnestly I wished for my sister, he invited the Count to accompany her, and offered to wait their time, if the period he named was too soon or inconvenient for them.

“ Alas !

“Alas! the Count had now no longer terms to keep with us on the score of interest, nor any necessity to disguise his bad propensities. He peremptorily and rudely declined the invitation, and so closely attended my sister, that it was impossible to obtain a moment’s private conversation;—and when he was on the point of leaving Paris, and asked if she had no letter to entrust him with, “No,” replied the Count, haughtily, “I have forbidden her to write.—Once a quarter,” added he, in a sneering tone, “you may possibly receive a letter for your signature, but all correspondence, otherwise than on business, must cease for ever.”

“My Lord began a warm expostulation. “My dear brother,” said my unhappy sister, “listen to me, and spare me the misery of hearing a contention that can answer no purpose but to encrease my distress. When I married the Count, he was

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the

the choice of my heart. I disobeyed the best, the tenderest, and the most generous of fathers;—I deserved to suffer for my ingratitude, disobedience, and presumptuous folly.—But that ever revered and excellent parent, could not reprobate his child, though his goodness must ever be an additional pain to my heart from a sense of my own unworthiness. He is now, I trust, receiving the reward of his virtues!”—
“Have you finished your tragedy rant and last dying speech?” asked the Count, very scornfully.

“No, Sir,” she replied, “I have a few more words to say, and most probably they will be the last I shall ever be permitted to address to Lord Somerset.” He smiled contemptuously, and she proceeded.

“I have long submitted to be the victim of duplicity—to wear a semblance of content with a breaking heart;—for I take
Heaven

Heaven to witness, that never directly or indirectly, by letter, words, looks, or manner, have I till now, given the least ground for suspicion, that I was unhappy, or lived otherwise than perfectly agreeable to my own choice.

“ If,” said she, turning to him, “ you conceive the will of my father unjust, too partial, and betraying a want of regard and confidence in you—to your own actions, Sir, you must look for the cause,—for I *invariably* asserted to him that I was happy and content; and I trust Heaven will pardon that falsehood as a venial sin, which had for its motive, the peace of a beloved parent, whose counsel I had slighted, and whose affection I had returned with disobedience and ingratitude. And I am now punished as I deserve, by the man who could have no esteem for an unworthy daughter.”

F 2

“ Very

"Very fine, upon my soul," exclaimed the Count, laughing, "why you really have discovered a new talent—tragedy declamation."

"My Lord was going to speak with warmth. "Stop, I beseech you," said she, "if my peace is dear to you, and my sister and dear babes dear to your heart, forbear to notice or resent whatever you may hear,—whatever may be said.—My dear, dear brother, may the Almighty shower down his blessings on you, my sister, and your children. My heart presages we shall meet no more. Remember you are the guardian of my child, and may she live to claim your protection, and be more fortunate than her mother. Now, Sir, I attend you, henceforth you are master of my destiny, I have no longer the pain of duplicity at my heart, no longer any measures to keep;—do with me what you like. Adieu, my good Lord Somerset,—I fear,
for

for ever adieu." She gave her hand to the Count, and they left the room.

"Nothing, my Lord declared, but his consideration for me, and the poor Hermine, could have with-held him from punishing the base deceiver on the spot.—Never had he found it so difficult to suppress his resentment and passion, which almost choaked him;—nor could he presently recover from the violence of his emotions.

"The noble friend of my father, who was joined in trust with him, promised my Lord to keep an attentive eye over the Count, and do every thing in his power to serve my sister, and contribute to her peace.

"A little consoled by this assurance, and the excellent character of the nobleman, he left Paris, being impatient to return to his Leonora, and his children.—

What I suffered when the scenes I have repeated, were related to me, is undescrivable.—I wanted some method to be adopted, to demand my sister from her tyrant; but my Lord convinced me any steps of that kind would be fruitless, and aggravate, and afford him a colour for using her ill.

“ I wrote to her, however, offering her my house as her asylum, if necessity or choice should incline her to bless me with her society. The answer that I received was in a few words decisive.

“ My dearest sister must henceforth judge from her own heart, the tender affection I shall to the last moment of my life, feel for her, and her worthy Lord.—Your kindness is printed in characters never to be erased, on my bosom; but this must be the last time that language will express my feelings. I am interdicted

terdicted from all further intimacy with you or your family,—from either writing or receiving any letters whatever;—I have given my word, and will abide by it.—Ah! my sister, I suffer too severely for filial disobedience, ever to incur a second reproach on that head.—I vowed obedience at the altar, and strictly have I conformed to it;—the failure of duty on one side, will not justify a breach of it on the other.—Once, and most fatally I erred against reason and duty, for that offence I submit unrepining to be the victim of arbitrary commands,—to me they are sacred. I shall write no more;—you may hear *of me*, but not *from me*,—and I conjure you to make no further attempts to write, what it will never be in my power to read.—Once more, Heaven bless you all.

HERMINE."

F 4

"Tis

“ 'Tis impossible, to describe the anguish this letter cost me; but what could we oppose against the Count's injustice, when sanctioned by her determined submission, and uncomplaining patience?—Shortly after we were informed that the Countess was retired again to the Forest Château, where she was inaccessible to every one, saw no company, nor ever was seen beyond the precincts of the forest. How did my heart bleed for her, how execrate her vile husband!

“ Four years passed away without any alteration in her melancholy life. The Count and the Chevalier lived in the most riotous and disreputable manner; the former had a declared mistress presided in his house; and the latter was guilty of every excess.—He alone was permitted to see my sister, and he carried to her the income allotted for her use.

“ At

“ At the expiration of this period, we were surprized by a letter from the Count, demanding his wife; accompanied with the most insolent threats of persecution and revenge if we presumed to detain her.

“ Alas! we were unhappily ignorant of her fate; and such was my opinion of the man, that I had no doubt but that he had destroyed her. My Lord, however, convinced me that could not be for the Count's interest, besides, what was become of the child? for he demanded that also.

“ We had some difficulty, and were obliged to give in the depositions of our household, that no such lady, or child, had been seen under our roof, to convince this wicked husband that we were entirely unacquainted with

F 5

every

every individual thing relative to her proceedings.

“ I was nearly distracted, when we received a letter from our friend at Paris,—also her trustee; enclosing me a letter, written by my dear unhappy sister, which I have put in my pocket, on purpose to read to you. These are the contents.

“ The truly miserable Hermine (for she disclaims all other names or titles) is now compelled to fly and seek an asylum among strangers for herself and her darling child, the sole remaining comfort she possesses in this life, and for whom alone she is anxious to preserve her existence. Persecution worse than death, which she has long endured from an unprincipled villain, to whose baseness she ascribes much of her sufferings from a cruel husband—from this man's power she is driven to throw herself among

among strangers, and rely solely on the protection of Heaven for her future destiny, and she relies on its goodness with humble confidence. She requests the worthy Marquis De Bressol not to pay any money that is her property, but to her receipt and order;—and she entreats him with all speed to inform her ever-beloved sister, Lady Somerset, that when she has obtained a resting place in security, *she* will most assuredly be made acquainted with the welfare of herself and darling child—though not by any direct communication with herself;—for however persecuted, *she* shall ever, till her last closing scene, keep the oath, that circumstances compelled her to take, sacred and inviolable. Within the next hour the unhappy Hermine flies from her country, and from her detested persecutors.”

“ Such was the melancholy letter transmitted to me, and it almost broke my heart.

heart. The Marquis added, that the date of the letter was four days previous to his receiving it; and that he had taken an attested copy of it, purposely to produce to the Count when next he saw him. Three months I suffered the most dreadful anxiety, when one morning the ambassador's chaplain, who was also mine, brought me a note written by my sister to him, in which he was requested to inform me, "that she had obtained an happy asylum with good people; that her health and spirits were much better, for she had neither insults or persecution to fear, and had the unspeakable delight of knowing that her child could not be torn from her."

"These few lines were in a packet received by the ambassador, and came thro' a channel he was not at liberty to name. During a period of five years, we regularly every quarter received the same short intimation that she was well, but without
any

any probability of tracing her residence, or even the country to which she had retired.

“ I do not speak of any thing relative to my own affairs during this time, for mine would have been an unclouded life but for the constant anxiety I felt for my sister,—more domestic happiness scarcely ever fell to the lot of any woman than I enjoyed—but it was a deceitful calm; yet I ought not to have hoped for exemption from the common fate of suffering humanity, and my security received a severe chastisement. But to return.

“ Five years had in some degree reconciled me to circumstances I could not controul; the horrid dissipations of the Count led me to believe his constitution must sink under his excesses, and by a natural train of thought, I looked forward to the emancipation of a much injured sister,

sister, and the transport of seeing her restored to the arms of her friends.

“ My Lord was preparing to leave town for the summer, previous to which we paid a visit to a friend at Richmond. On our return in the evening, I was a little surprised to meet my good Father La Case in the hall. I enquired to what event I was indebted for a visit at such an unusual hour?—“ Give me leave to attend you to your dressing room, my Lady, and I shall inform you.” My blood turned chill—I saw I was to be prepared for ill news. I flew from him to the nursery, almost breathless with terror—I found my three cherubs all well, and asleep—I lifted my heart in thankfulness to Heaven. In a moment I shuddered, it must be my sister. I ran back to the library, where I saw my Lord and the priest in deep conversation, and both much agitated.—“ Tell me,” I exclaimed, “ tell me the worst at once!

my

my poor Hermine! tell me, have I not lost a sister?"

"Father La Casse advanced,—“ The will of the Almighty is equally just and merciful, he releases suffering humanity from this sublunary world, to enjoy eternal felicity as a reward for virtue and patient endurance.”

“ She is then dead,” I cried, “ that suffering martyr has sunk under silent uncomplaining misery!—Or perhaps, dreadful thought!—perhaps she is murdered!”—
“ No, my dear Leonora,” said my Lord, “ not so, not actually murdered, though nature has indeed sunk under accumulated wrongs.”

“ In the frenzy of the moment, I uttered the most bitter execrations against the vile Count, and besought Heaven to punish him as he deserved. The good
man

man checked my violence, and my Lord exerted his tenderest entreaties to calm my agitations, and rather to rejoice that she was now happy.

“After some time a torrent of tears relieved my over-charged heart, and I requested to know all the melancholy particulars. “Melancholy indeed,” said my Lord, “but remember her sufferings are no more; she is now superior to pity—she is reunited to her father, and both partakers of supreme felicity.” Seeing me a little calm, he first gave me a small scrip of paper. Here it is,” added Lady Somerset, taking it from her pocket, “I have never parted with it. These are the contents:

“My dearest, ever loved Sister,

“The blow is struck, I am at length subdued.—My retreat has been discovered, my child, for whom alone I lived, is torn from my arms by the order of her

her inhuman father. I can no longer struggle with my fate, I am dying—I feel the icy hand of death creeping over my heart. The abbess engages to write all the particulars of this last sad event that drags me to my grave. In that peaceful asylum your poor Hermine will soon know rest, and the wicked will cease to trouble her. But, alas! my child, the last dear object of my cares, into what hands art thou fallen!—Oh, my dear Lord Somerset, my ever beloved sister! write, demand, protect my Hermine!—to your friendly bosoms I entrust her, oh, rescue, preserve my child from the contagious example of vice!—But let her remember she has a *father*—in all things that is not contrary to the laws of God, or human institutions, bid her revere her parental duties, and dread the crime of filial disobedience.

“ Oftentimes a line *may* be drawn between unqualified obedience and a prompt disobedience;

disobedience;—but how rarely is self-sufficient youth competent to judge between the fit and the unfit!—O, my sister, guard her against the fascination of the eye, which too often misleads and supercedes judgment;—and the punishment of our weakness follows quickly on the commission of our error.

“ I can write no more,—may the Almighty Father of all, bless and preserve my child!—May he continue to my dear and happy sister, and her worthy Lord, and to their dear children, every comfort and blessing of this life,—and may we all meet in a blessed eternity!—Amen.

HERMINE.”

“ I see,” said Lady Somersét, observing the emotions of Lewis, “ I see that your’s is a heart as yet unadulterated by a commerce with mankind;—your sensibilities have not been blunted by the vices that disgrace

disgrace society and contaminate the mind of youth; encourage those effusions of nature which have their source in virtue.— A humane man can hardly ever be a corrupt one, for if, as a human being he may fall into error, the feelings of his heart will enable him to recover himself,—will rouse his slumbering virtue, and make him doubly cautious of a second lapse, which must deprive him of his own esteem.”

Could Lady Somerset have peeped into the heart of Lewis, she would have seen how painfully he felt every word she spake; and some part of the emotions which visibly increased, and for which she gave him the highest credit, were certainly to be placed to the score of confusion and self-reproach. She however proceeded:—
“ ’Tis unnecessary for me to relate the anguish I felt, or the sorrow that long was an inmate of my bosom;—I see that you can enter into my feelings, and appreciate the
extent

extent of my loss, in an amiable, long suffering victim, now hurried to a premature grave by an unworthy husband.—I shall, therefore, pass over my own sufferings, as also omit the long and circumstantial letter from the Abbess of St. Clare, where my martyred sister died; and only mention that the Chevalier Soissons, with proper attendants, appeared at the convent, with an order, signed by his Majesty, for the immediate delivery of the young Hermine to the care of her father, and those persons deputed by him to receive her.

“ This order, however nefariously obtained, the Abbess was not at liberty to dispute.—My unhappy sister fainted several times, and implored the barbarian, on her knees, to give up his cruel commission, or permit her to attend on her darling girl. This was, it seems, his remarkable answer, with the malicious smile of a remorseless fiend:—“ ’Tis well, madam, I foresaw

foresaw a time would come for retaliation; 'tis now *your turn to sue*, to implore pity, and you shall experience the mercy you was so ready to extend to others.—This is my day of triumph!—Pride has supported your spirits, but now your *heart* shall be lacerated, and pride will be subdued by feeling;—for I solemnly swear, you shall never see your child again!—Tho' her life is safe, so far I extend my pity and no further." She again lost her senses, and the wretch, the vile implement of an inhuman husband, carried off the poor child, whose agonies, at leaving her mother, were heart-piercing.

"When my unhappy sister returned to life, and found that the dear object, for whose sake alone she had struggled against overwhelming misery, was cruelly taken from her for ever, she sank under the bitter conflict of contending emotions.—She was carried to her bed, from whence she
rose

rose no more, but to be carried to the silent tomb that covered all her wrongs and sufferings till the great day of final retribution.

“ The day before her death she wrote a few lines to her most inhuman husband, and those which I also received, saying, “ The cruel command imposed upon me not to write to my beloved sister, *now* surely may be dispensed with; since, long before she receives this letter, the hand that writes and the heart that dictates will be cold and lifeless, and can no more offend a cruel, and unjust husband. O, my good mother,” added she, to the Abbess, “ I trust in the mercy of a most gracious and righteous Judge.—I trust that my sufferings here will expiate the crime of filial disobedience, and the presumptuous confidence of erring youth.”

“ The good Abbess added, that in her life and death she was equally admirable
and

and exemplary.—Some important secret died with her, for almost her last words were,—“Time and conscience may disclose that secret I solemnly vowed never to divulge.—May God forgive my barbarous enemies, and grant them repentance, then will justice be done to the memory of an ill-fated victim.”

“I omit many other particulars related by the Abbess, to be as brief as possible.—You may be sure we lost no time in complying with the desires of the dear departed,—we wrote immediately to the Count, but receiving no answer, my Lord was on the point of setting out for Paris, when a letter came from the Marquis De Bressol to acquaint us, that the cruel husband, and unjust father had, by interest and artifice, procured an order from the King to be the sole guardian of Hermine's person, and of all the property she was entitled to in France, until she arrived at the

the age of one-and-twenty. The will of her grandfather, till that period, being set aside by command of his Majesty, and the property to be taken from the hands of the Marquis, and Lord Somerset, who, as an Englishman and a protestant, was deemed an improper guardian for a subject of France, who had a father living, and competent to the care of his own child.

“ This order and revocation, or rather annihilation of our rights, the Count, accompanied by the Chevalier, produced to the Marquis, demanding the strict performance of the duty imposed upon him by Sovereign commands, to resign all further interference with the young Hermine’s person or fortune.

“ The Marquis was inexpressibly shocked, it was the first intimation he had received of my sister’s death;—and stung to the soul by the insulting apathy of her husband,

husband, and the nefarious proceeding that had thrown her child solely in the power of an unprincipled man;—he could not contain the indignation he felt, but reproached the Count and his coadjutor, in the severest terms that a sense of their baseness inspired. But he had to do with men callous to every feeling of honour or sentiment!—The Count ironically told him, “he had leave to rail; so that himself and his friend had circumvented such able politicians as Lord Somerset and the Marquis De Bressol, they gave him full scope for as much abuse as he pleased.—In the mean time, he would do well to obey the order he had received, with all possible diligence.”

“The Marquis recollecting that by mildness he might obtain permission to see Hermine, strove to repress his resentment, and asked where she was?—“Already in a convent,” answered the Count, “so far the request of her grandfather shall be complied

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with;

with;—and I will also tell you, that I am charmed with her, she is an angelic little girl, and I more than ever hate her mother for having so long deprived me of seeing her.—I love her infinitely, and am determined to have her undivided affection;—therefore, neither you, Marquis, nor the Somersets, whom I mortally hate, shall ever see her whilst I retain any power over her.” The Marquis condescended to implore the brute to let him see her sometimes in his presence, but was peremptorily refused,—and, in short, obliged to acquiesce in all his unjust requisitions.

“ Such had been his representations to the King,—the unjust imputations thrown on the conduct of poor Hermine,—and the impropriety urged of confiding a native of France, a catholic, to the care of Lord Somerset, from a pique conceived against the Count, because his Lady had married contrary to the advice of the Somersets, who

who wished to have got her to England, and rob France of her two richest heiresses; their machinations had influenced the Count De Melian to make a will so evidently unjust to his country, as well as to his son-in-law, the father of this young heiress, whom they would undoubtedly prejudice against him, if permitted to have any intercourse with her. Such were the grounds of the petition that had answered all their unworthy views, by being granted to the utmost extent of their wishes.

“ I leave you to judge of my distraction and my Lord’s concern, both were fruitless, as were all the joint applications made to the tyrannical unfeeling Count;—he would not even inform us in what convent she was placed for education, and every enquiry was attended with disappointment. The Marquis preferred, a petition to the King,—his Majesty would hear nothing against the rights of a father;—no

G 2

doubt

doubt the claim was a sacred one, but circumstances change the complexion of things, and the Count's general character ought to have been considered.—Alas! so well had he laid his plans that all the odium of his conduct was thrown on the perverse humour of his wife, in alienating her affections and her person from him, and cruelly carrying off his child.

“ Thus the much injured Hermine suffered, even after death, by the colour given to her conduct, to justify the arbitrary measures he pursued against us. The King condescended to tell the Marquis, the young Hermine was under his eye, and would receive the most finished education. With this account, from time to time, we were obliged to be content, looking forward for the period when she would be emancipated from the convent;—tho' in that long interval how many changes might,
how

how many changes, alas! have taken place, heart wounding to me!

“ The deceitful calm of my domestic happiness was succeeded by a storm that shipwrecked the chief of my treasures, and left me but one bark to rest all my hope of future comfort on.

“ But before I speak of myself, let me mention one circumstance while it occurs to me.—When our dear father was in England, he had consulted with my Lord about securing a certain sum in the English funds, for my sister, and the child then unborn;—and, after his return, fifteen thousand pounds was remitted, and bought in, by my Lord, in the stocks, for the joint benefit of the two Hermiones, in the names of two trustees.

“ When our father died, his will took no notice of this sum, and my Lord judged it

G. 3 prudent

prudent not to mention it, yet wished to inform my sister. The Count so closely watched them that not a word could pass unnoticed, he therefore briefly wrote it on a scrip of paper he could conceal in his hand, and as he led her into the dinner parlour (the Count close to them), he pressed her hand, and she closed it on the paper,—in seating herself, she found an opportunity to convey it to her pocket. The next day he received an answer in the same manner, the words were,—“Blessed be the memory of my father!—I thank God for this *certain provision* for my child.—Do not repeat this mode of conveyance, 'tis too hazardous,—we have the eyes of a lynx upon us.”

“One would almost imagine that my poor sister foresaw the Count's rapacious intentions.—I do not think that *I* hazard a breach of charity in believing that the wretches who tore her child from her, hoped for the very event that followed,—
that

that death or madness would ensue;—but they are gone, at least both lost to the world, and both, I hope, repentant.—May they meet with that mercy they never extended to others!

“ I shall not dwell on my own miseries, Heaven was pleased to take from me the best of men,—the kindest husband, the tenderest father, that ever woman was blest with!—A cold, caught in a fishing party, carried him off in three weeks. What I endured words cannot describe, nor could I attempt it, since even now, at this distance of time, every feeling of my heart is agonized,—for “my woes clustered;”—within a year from my ever beloved Lord’s death, I was deprived of two darling children,—my son, with an inflammatory fever, my sweet Leonora in a decline.—*They* are happy!—*they* have joined their earthly parent in the mansions of their Heavenly Father,—and

G 4

whilst

whilst I lament my own loss, I hope I can rejoice in their felicity!

“ 'Tis now nearly two years, subsequent to my heavy misfortunes, that I received a letter from the good old Marquis De Bressol, with information that conveyed a transient gleam of pleasure to my mind. The Chevalier Soissons had been thrown from his horse, both his legs broken, and otherwise so dangerously hurt that his death was expected. Under that impression, all the villainous actions of his life rose to his view, and gave him the most shocking agonies,—he sent for his confessor, and, by his direction, for the Count. What passed cannot be known, but by the exclamations and subsequent conduct of the Count.—He wrung his hands,—beat his breast;—“ O, the vile deceiver!—What, have I been a tool, a puppet in his hands, to serve all his base purposes, to plunge myself into guilt and unpardonable crimes to gratify his vices!—

vices!—Fool! wretched fool that I have been!—O, the poor murdered Hermine!” Such were his exclamations, as repeated by the physician to the Marquis.

“Contrary to all expectation the wretched Chevalier recovered, if a recovery it can be called, to be a cripple, oppressed with a wounded conscience, and to be a Carthusian, the severest order, I am told, in France; where, if still living, he must drag on a miserable existence, under all the horrors of remorse.

“Such is his wretched fate! — The Count soon after disappeared, without any one being able to trace him, or find out the residence of his daughter, which has greatly added to my misery; though a gleam of hope has sometimes streamed before me, that I might live to see that dear child, from a note which was conveyed to the Marquis.—“ When Hermine

G 5

attains

attains the age of one-and-twenty she will claim the protection of her aunt. Alas! she will have but a very small portion of her fortune left—two unprincipled, vile men, have shamefully dissipated it.—A father has betrayed his trust, and wronged his child!—He goes to expiate his crime by a voluntary banishment from the world.—Pray for him!”

“ Such were the contents of this note, from which I derived hope.—But a very ill state of health, from internal anguish and hopeless misery, drove me from England to seek for health in foreign countries. I stopped some time with the Marquis at Paris, who, full of years and goodness, is now daily expecting his translation to a better world. My son, my beloved Somerset, is now on his travels, and I engaged to wait for him here. My general state of health is better; and the dear hope I have now caught of once more
clasping

clasping my beloved sister to my arms in the person of her darling child, will I trust have the most beneficial effects towards re-establishing it.

“ I cannot give you any conception of the emotions I felt at your earnest gaze on my face, it was such an expression as found its way to my heart; and when on returning I saw you with the servant, I eagerly demanded what you had said?—The man repeated your words, and I was seized with a thousand hopes, fears, and anxieties. There was ever a most strong resemblance between my sister and myself, only that she was not quite so tall, and rather fairer; but the likeness that struck you, gave me the most flattering presages—and it is impossible to express what I felt during your illness from an ardent wish to converse with you, a fear of being impertinently troublesome, and tortured with vague apprehensions that my hopes might be annihilated

hilated when I should obtain this much desired conference.

“ *Now*, however, I have no doubts; your description of her and her father, her name, and the initials of his, confirm me in the assurance that I have at length found my dear Hermine,—that loved object I have so many years languished to press to my heart. I have already written to my son to follow me to Brussels, I do not expect him this month; but in three days I shall set off for the Forest of Ardenne, to claim my beloved niece.

“ I must request a letter of introduction from you to the dear good Father Francis, that I may have the benefit of his assistance; and if you will make me the bearer of a few lines to the dear girl herself, I shall be happy to take them. You will also be going to England, and there we shall meet; mean time consider yourself
self

self as one of my family, (Lewis started) never shall we forget our obligations to you and your good mother—though *you* dwelt lightly on them, I can see how I ought to appreciate them.”

Lewis was about to speak.—“ No disqualifying speeches,” added Lady Somerset, smiling, “ you must allow me to think, and act as I please. If you are in England before me, you shall take a letter to my steward, who will have orders to make my house your home; and I shall give you other letters as well. Fear not for your future fortune, it shall not depend on the Douglas family; though I commend your attachment to this poor invalid, and hope your friendly attentions will have the desired effect.

“ Here then I close my prolix narration—and look forward to the unspeakable delight of making my niece happy.”

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.



LEWIS having taken leave of Lady Somerset, returned to Douglas, deeply ruminating on the story of the unfortunate Countess and her charming daughter.—The self-accusations of the Count no longer surprised him, when he considered the atrocity of his conduct towards his much injured wife; and he shuddered to think of the horror and remorse that must have clouded his latter days with unavailing anguish, when no reparation could be made to the woman he had so cruelly wronged.

“ Ah!”

“ Ah ! ” cried Lewis, “ what misfortunes, what misery can bear any degree of proportion to the torment of remorse, of fruitless regret !—Those happy days when I worked in the forest, with a mind at ease, an unreprieving conscience, when toil and labour were sweetened by the reflection that I contributed to the support of my aged relatives, those days were halcyon ones indeed !—And what have I exchanged for contented poverty, for cheerful labour, for days and nights of internal approbation and peaceful rest ?—The poor gratifications of sense—of eating at a well furnished table, without the zest of appetite—of running from one amusement to another, without enjoying pleasure from any when novelty ceased to be the motive—of feeling myself out of my proper place, a conscious inferiority to my company, a lassitude of mind, an enervated body :—And, to all this, eternal inquietude, and bitter regret, for having destroyed the peace of poor Caroline,

Caroline ;—for having driven her from the world, a victim to self-reproach, and my ungovernable passions!—Ah! my beloved mother, my good and venerable old friend! you knew not the weak, imbecile mind of the youth, who, exposed to no temptation was unacquainted with guilt, and negative vice obtained the stamp of virtue in your partial judgment. But the event has proved me unworthy of your confidence, and rendered me despicable as well as vile, in being the dupe of artful men, and aiding their schemes by my own folly and presumption.”

Such was the mental soliloquy of Lewis, as he walked home from the beautiful villa of Lady Somerset ;—consequently his looks wore a serious cast when he appeared before Douglas, who hastily exclaimed, “ I am glad you are returned, Berthier,—I have received a letter from my poor father, there is also one for you ;—but to speak of mine first.

first. After dwelling some time on the sudden melancholy death of my mother, he says, “ the sensible and affectionate heart of poor Fidelia, has long been tried in the school of affliction ; and since her return to her parents, she has borne with unexampled patience, the most poignant distress, and the most unprovoked unkindness.—With difficulty I have forced her into company, and since a late melancholy event, obliged her to accept an invitation for a few days, from a friend at Richmond, where she has accidentally dropped into company with a foreign nobleman, and his lady. The latter on her introduction, earnestly enquired if she had a brother in Florence ? and being answered in the affirmative, embraced Fidelia warmly,—professed you had been one of her most intimate friends, and requested the kind regards of *your* old friend Eleanora.”

“ Eleanora ! ” exclaimed Lewis. “ Yes, that cruel woman, not content with bringing

ing me to the verge of the grave, by her perfidy and ingratitude, now presumes to insult me, by claiming an interest in my friendship, and seeking an introduction to my family. If she is married, surely she ought to shun, rather than solicit an acquaintance with my connexions; and if not married, how daring and presumptuous in her to assume a name and title she has no pretensions to, and insult the characters of virtuous women by imposing herself on their society. False, perfidious woman! I would not see her again for worlds.—But how can I act, in what terms disclose to my father her real character, without implicating myself,—without exposing her to contempt in a strange country, and possibly in so doing, involve him in some unpleasant dilemma with the nobleman whose name she is permitted to assume. Dear Berthier! tell me what can I say? I must not surely tacitly countenance her intimacy with my sister?”

“ By

“By no means,” cried Lewis, hastily, “your silence and forbearance in such a case would be highly criminal; but before you decide on your plan of action, I will look over my letter.” On breaking the seal, Lewis perceived it was an answer to the one he had written.—Mr. Douglas had received it before he had sent to the post what he had written to his son;—and as Lewis expected, was exceedingly unhappy at the very unfavourable account given of young Douglas.

He besought their speedy return to England by easy stages, and every possible accommodation necessary for an invalid.—He expressed much gratitude to Lewis, and assured him he would be sincerely welcomed in England with his friend; and though he would endeavour to flatter himself, that the convalescence of his son was in a progressive state, yet he requested to hear from him at every stage they rested
for

for a day or two, that his anxiety might be lessened. He concluded by requesting his acceptance of a liberal order on their banker, and he also sent an unlimited letter of credit to Douglas.

There being nothing in this letter that required secrecy, Lewis delivered it with a cheerful air. "Your worthy father, Sir, will I trust, find he has not flattered himself; with good care, easy travelling, and a mind diverted by a variety of objects, I have no doubt but that his hopes and wishes may be realized"

"I know not that," answered Douglas, in a melancholy tone, "I am exceedingly disturbed by hearing of Eleanora's conduct, would to Heaven she was not in London. I know not how to act, what to say."—"May I presume to offer *my* services?" asked Lewis, "shall I write to Mr. Douglas?" "I wish you would," returned he, "say

“say what you please to inform them she is not a proper companion for my sister; but her malice and revenge must not be provoked by any open insults, for she has passions that outstrip the winds—she would leave nothing undone to revenge an affront.—An Italian woman of her character, sets no bounds to the gratification of malice.”

“I am glad you think so justly of her principles,” said Lewis. “Ah! Berthier,” cried Douglas, “I hate, despise, and adore her.—Yes, I confess my folly, still I think of her with rapture; nor can I answer for myself if again exposed to her fascinations.—She is a Circe, that enchants and enslaves for ever;—I hope we shall never meet.”

“I hope so too,” returned Lewis, “but think no more of her, rouse yourself from this fatal weakness, and you will soon recover health and strength of mind, to conquer

quer an attachment for which you must despise yourself, if much longer indulged; at present 'tis a juvenile folly, a passion at eighteen, which will fade away of itself if you cease to nourish it."

"It may be so," said Douglas, his pride a little piqued, "the advantage of *two* years, and your intuitive knowledge of mankind, and of the human heart, gleaned in the Forest of Ardenne, must doubtless make *you* a qualified judge of the strength of the passions;—*your management in your own little affair*, has given proof that at *twenty* an attachment may be conquered, though the folly of eighteen retains the impression." Lewis was inconceivably hurt.

"If this language is just, if it is generous, or deserved on my part, Mr. Douglas, I have to ask your pardon, for the liberty of speaking my sentiments so freely.—You have justly then reproved my presumption.

I

I had, indeed, at the moment, in my zeal for your health and peace, forgot my humble birth, my defective education, and that *which is more degrading than either*, I had forgot my own culpability.—I thank you, Sir, for teaching me to know myself.”—With a respectful bow he hastily quitted the room, no longer able to repress the grief and vexation he felt from the reproach he appeared to deserve.

“ Oh, that I had never quitted that peaceful forest! Why did that good, mistaken man, take me from honest labour, inform my mind, enlighten my understanding, and inculcate sentiments which seem to be considered as improperly associated with my low birth, and humble occupation.” He had flung himself on a sofa, in an agony of painful retrospection, when Douglas entered the apartment.—That young man had no sooner given way to the ebullitions of pride and spleen, than
he

he felt his unkindness;—the sensible and mild reproof from Lewis, struck him instantly with shame and regret, and after one little gulp of rising emotion, he sacrificed pride to feeling, and followed Lewis.

“ My dear Berthier forgive my petulance,—hasty and ungovernable spirits are always running into error, and provoke the contempt their pride revolts against;—thus, you see, I am sensible of my unkindness and ingratitude towards you, acknowledge my fault, and “ *thank you* ” in my turn.” “ No more,” I beseech you, Sir,” said Lewis, taking his offered hand, “ do me but justice,—believe that it is impossible I can ever mean to offend you intentionally;—and if my anxiety for your peace of mind, should draw from me any expressions officious or impertinent, then recollect from whence I came, and that my small stock of knowledge was drawn from humble parents, and the lessons of a good
man,

man, a stranger to the world.—Do justice to my heart, tho' you may condemn my want of politeness."

"I will, I do," cried Douglas, "I confess you are my superior in mind, much more than by years, and perhaps that mortifies me in the comparison;—so forgive my folly, for you must allow that I have been sufficiently humbled, and very ill-treated of late, and of course not in the best of all possible dispositions." "We will then drop the subject," returned Lewis — "Is it your wish that I should write to Mr. Douglas?"

"By all means, for I would not have poor Fidelia drawn into an intimacy with ——" He stopt, and at that moment Father St. Pierre was announced. They freely communicated their affairs to him, with their intention of leaving Florence in two days from the present one. Douglas

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relieved

relieved from any pecuniary difficulties by his father's generosity, was desirous of settling the demands of Count Benito and De Preux. "They are infamous, I know, but," said he, "if my folly enabled them to take their advantages, I richly deserve to suffer for my imprudence, weakness, and credulity."

"But your father, Sir, has no such claims upon him, and I do not understand that you are independent. Come, come," added he, seeing Douglas confused, "your honour and conscience may be pretty easy, when you consider the large sums of ready money they have robbed you of. Leave me to settle their demands,—write,—refer them to me, and depend upon it your honour shall not suffer if left in my trust."

Lewis warmly applauded this expedient. —"You can have no cause to fear any dishonourable imputations by this step;—
if

if the good father undertakes to discharge all demands upon you that are just and honourable, you may give in a schedule of your debts, including *their's*, and leave him to pay all at his discretion." The spirit and pride of Douglas rather revolted against this advice. "Scoundrels as they were, he had engaged to pay them, and his engagements ought to be sacred."

With some difficulty his opinion was over-ruled, and Father St. Pierre was to be the guardian of his honour, and of his money. Douglas retired into another room to sleep, and Lewis seized the opportune moment, to consult with the good man in what manner he could appropriate a sum of money for the use of Caroline?

"'Tis not considerable," said he, "but may be useful to her; and wherever I am,—in whatever station of life, I will endeavour to set a part such a share of my in-

H 2

come,

come, as shall preserve her from being a burthen to her family, or obliged, by *necessity*, to take the veil.—'Tis my duty, and as much my inclination, to leave her as comfortable as possibly she can be."

The priest was well pleased with the sentiment and conduct of our peasant, and very readily took this commission upon himself, saying, "Among our zealous people, I should very possibly incur uncharitable reflections, by being known to busy myself thus about the temporal affairs of two young men, not remarked for the propriety of their conduct;—but I live to my own heart, and am satisfied that I do not violate any duty, religious or moral, by assisting you to escape from the snares of very unprincipled men—and by serving an Englishman, I gratify one of the first social duties that bind man to man, which is gratitude."

"Gratitude!"

“Gratitude!” repeated Lewis. “Yes, many years ago, particular circumstances called me to England, to London;—and some untoward events I did not foresee, very greatly embarrassed me,—the death of the only friend and acquaintance I had in the kingdom, and subsequent pecuniary distresses which I had not guarded against. The persons with whom I lodged were humane and liberal, but a stranger and a foreigner had no claims upon them. I was extremely reluctant to apply to our ambassador for particular reasons;—I wrote to France, but I was reduced to absolute indigence, when one morning a most respectable looking gentleman entered my room. His person was not absolutely unknown to me, as he resided in the neighbourhood, and I had frequently seen him pass;—he was a merchant.

“He politely apologized for his intrusion, and said, “he had been informed

of my temporary embarrassment in a strange country, by the death of my friend;—requested to be considered as my banker, laid down a bank note on the table, and hastily withdrew, without giving me time to recover from my astonishment. The note was for twenty pounds;—it amply relieved the whole of my wants, until I received another remittance.

“I then waited on my generous benefactor to repay the money.—“Excuse me, Sir,” said he, “I am very happy that you no longer want it;—but I commit it to your hands in trust for any poor countryman of mine you may chance to meet with, to whom such a trifle may be useful.”

“There was a man, a true Samaritan! From that hour I honour and revere an Englishman,—I feel it an indispensable

dispensable duty more particularly to assist them on every occasion that offers. That generous and benevolent nation has claims upon *my* gratitude for the noble charity of an individual, that will never, I hope, be effaced from my memory."

"It was indeed a *noble* action," returned Lewis, whose heart glowed with approbation, "and I am more than ever desirous of seeing a nation so generally characterized as brave, sincere, liberal, and munificent."

"Such I believe is their reputation in most countries, and I would have respect and esteem for the British character be impressed upon your mind. But beware of an unbounded confidence, pay attention to their professions, but do not implicitly rely on them—do not be deceived by hasty, indiscriminate protestations of esteem and

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friendship,

friendship, for both are of slow growth in a sensible discerning mind. The gay and volatile will lavish their professions, and throw away their praises, without feeling a tittle of what they so volubly utter; but the man of real worth waits to correct a fresh prepossession by the decision of judgment, before he commits himself to a stranger. Judge of men by their actions, by their conduct in private life—see them as sons, brothers, and with their relative connexions:—"Tis from their behaviour in their domestic circle, from whence you may draw a true estimate of their hearts, not in the midst of the world, when company and gaiety throw a veil over their real characters.

"I speak of mankind in general," concluded the good priest, "such as you will find them in all countries; for human nature, making a small allowance for customs and education, is nearly every where the same.

same. Suspicion is a base passion, but prudence and discrimination can alone procure you valuable acquaintance. The society you have been thrown into at Florence sufficiently illustrates my hypothesis, and exemplifies the error of taking a character upon trust, as my brother unfortunately did. De Preux. In one word, my good young man, pay the strictest attention to the manners and actions of those you associate with; for the whole happiness of your future life depends upon your discrimination and integrity."

A youth of modern manners would have yawned over this borish prosing, and given the officious adviser to the devil; but the literal peasant attended with reverence, and treasured this good counsel as religiously, as "proofs of holy writ." From Father Francis he had learnt the purest documents of religious and moral duties, but *he* knew little beyond the precincts of the forest.

H 5

whereas

whereas his brother, St. Pierre, had mixed with society, had studied mankind, and had drawn his small stock of knowledge from observation and experience. He felt interested for Lewis, as the unsophisticated child of nature, and was desirous to guard him against the delusions of the world, having no natural friends or protector to superintend his conduct. Happily the young man could properly appreciate the cause and effect, and determined to regulate his future behaviour agreeably to the tenor of both.

After the priest had left him, he applied to his pen—a letter of introduction to Father Francis, and a few lines to *the Lady Hermine*, for Lady Somerset to take with her, cost him some pains; particularly the latter, which was written in a style the most distant and respectful. The *charming Hermine*, the *beautiful Hermine*, were epithets he no longer pronounced; she was
now

now beyond a doubt a Lady by birth, had a large fortune, great connexions—she was the *Lady* Hermine, it became him to think of her only as a being elevated to a degree beyond his most distant wishes. He sometimes felt disposed to regret that he could not marry Caroline, yet he had no sentiments in her favour but compassion; and as she had positively rejected him, it was not likely that she would now change her mind, and it would be wrong in him to urge it. To her he must write, however, and take a last and tender farewell.—It was a painful effort, for self reproach and bitter regret mingled in every line

Having completed these tasks, he went to the apartment of Mr. Douglas; he found him looking melancholy, and in deep thought. On the entrance of Lewis he strove to shake off his dejection.—“Have you written to my father?” he asked.—

“No,”

“No,” replied Lewis, “I will write now, in your presence.”

“Is there a necessity for that,” returned Douglas, “do you suppose I doubt your friendship or integrity?”—“No, but in matters that so immediately concern you, without being wanting in either, I may perhaps say too little, or too much, 'tis therefore my wish that you should judge for me in points so delicate.”

Douglas looked earnestly at him, —
“How you have acquired such sentiments, where you have learnt to consider on points of delicacy, is surprising to me.”—“I do not understand you,” returned Lewis.—
“My small stock of information relative to the laws of society, I have assuredly gleaned from you; but a knowledge of right and wrong, of the respect due to our superiors, and the regard that ought to be paid to the feelings of others, is so natural
for

for every one to comprehend, and practise, that I can't see any cause for surprise, unless you supposed me an idiot from being a peasant and a wood-cutter."

"I cannot suppose, however," said Douglas, "that all the wood-cutters I saw in the forest, wretched illiterate looking beings, were equally intelligent with yourself."—"I believe *I had* many advantages over my companions, my father and mother died when I was very young, but my grandfather and his wife had been born and taught better than most other villagers, though plain country folks; the former, as a nobleman's steward for some years, added experience to his little stock of knowledge, and by his instructions laid a foundation, which Father Francis built on, and improved to what you see. Thus every thing you observe in me is natural, and by no means surprising."—"Well, I shall not now dispute the point with you, though

the acceptance of a friendly memorial from a person of my age and sex."

"Your Ladyship must excuse me," said Lewis, respectfully declining the present, "you owe me nothing, 'tis I am the person obliged and honoured, in being made the happy instrument of your present hopes and future prospects." "Tho' I consider you as a very wonderful young man," returned she, smiling, "I see you have yet to learn the difference between a wrong placed pride and a proper virtuous one. That person possesses a false pride, and an improper delicacy, who is above receiving a trifling favour from the hands of friendship; whilst the truly noble soul accepts it with pleasure, knowing that by so doing he conveys the greatest delight to the friendly bestower, and the debt of gratitude is shared between them. You may, if you please," added she, "place this lesson of information into *your* scale of obligation, but I think
you

you dare not decline giving my little book a place in your pocket, nor refuse me the pleasure of considering myself as your friend." "I dare not, indeed, Madam, presume to decline any gift of your's, when honoured with such high distinction, but—" "But what?—Pray what new proof of a wrong-placed pride are you going to exhibit?" "Ah! Madam," cried he, earnestly, "suppose Mademoiselle Hermine should not be your niece!"

"Not for a moment would I harbour a doubt so cruel!" exclaimed Lady Somerset, "she is—she must be my niece!—Not a shadow of doubt shall perplex my mind, for every circumstance tends to confirm it,—therefore not another word on that subject. You shall have the earliest information, that you may rely on.—You will be in England before me, you have my address and I expect my orders will be attended to. I shall write to you, addressed at my house,
and

and now adieu." Lewis rose, and was about to speak, she prevented him, "I hate leave-taking, it makes me melancholy. God bless you!—In that is comprehended every good wish,—so farewell till we meet in England." He kissed her hand,—“Heaven grant your best wishes!” said he, and bowing respectfully quitted the house.

On returning home, he met with a most affectionate letter from Caroline, the contents we shall not detail,—she assured him that she was perfectly content with her situation, that she now enjoyed that peace and serenity always her desire and most congenial with her temper and constitution. She should never fail, in her orisons to Heaven and the Holy Virgin, to pray for his temporal prosperity and happiness, and his eternal felicity in the world to come.—From Father St. Pierre she should hear of him, but all correspondence between them must cease from the date of her letter.—

She

She concluded with some good advice, many good wishes, and an affectionate adieu in this world for ever. Such was the purport of her letter, which very greatly affected Lewis, and hung a long time on his mind.

Douglas had been engaged in settling his pecuniary affairs. Neither De Preux or his two associates were then in Florence, but that morning a man of some character had called on him with bills drawn by them; he explained his situation, and referred him to Father St. Pierre, who had authority to pay all just demands on him. Their respective affairs being concluded that day, on the following one they took leave of Florence, on their route to England.— Their journey being tedious and uninteresting, we shall leave them, and travel on to meet Lady Somerset, on her arrival at the Abbey of St. Hubert, in the Forest of Ardenne.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXI.



LADY Somerset travelled with speed, affection the spur, and hope for her guide. She was not a little surprised, on her entrance into that vast forest, which, endless as it seemed to her, was but a small part of what it had been in former days,—yet was still of sufficient magnitude to excite her wonder, that an abbey and a convent should be preserved in a spot so remote, so gloomy and unfrequented. In the course of her travels, she had before remarked, that religious houses had most commonly
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the advantage of being fixed in fertile spots, pleasant situations, and near to, or in, good populous towns.

“Poor Count,” said she, as they descended through the trees down a declivity to the abbey,—“poor Count! sad and gloomy must have been your mind to choose this solitary, dreary residence to wind-up the close of life!—Whilst I detest the man, I can pity the wretched penitent, and now charitably hope his sins may be forgiven.”

On stopping at the abbey, she requested to speak with Father Francis.—It was a sight so unusual for ladies, apparently of distinction, to be seen in that unfrequented forest, that it created no small confusion among the brethren, and the good father hastened out with equal surprise and alacrity. “I am come abruptly upon you,” said Lady Somerset, “but I thought it would

would be useless to send an avant courier, to announce the visit of a stranger.—I come from Florence;—I have letters for you, I have particular business, and shall be glad to have a private conference with you.” The father heard her, in mute surprise,—“Who could she be from Florence—certainly not the lady who had so much injured Mr. Douglas!”—This was the first idea that crossed his mind.—Then he thought it might be Mrs. Douglas herself,—then he feared for his beloved pupil,—in short, so many various thoughts crowded upon him, that she had some time ceased to speak before he could find words to answer her.

“I see your astonishment,” said she, “but do not dread any unpleasant tidings, I come, I hope, the harbinger of joy!—I want you to accompany me to the convent, to Hermine.” “To Hermine!” repeated he, in an animated tone, “do you come
to

to see that good young woman?"—"I do, I do!" cried she, impatiently, "come into the carriage, father.—I hope,—I am sure, that she is a dear and much valued relation of mine!"—"Indeed!" said he, without any further scruple stepping into the coach, "Why are you a French woman?" "I was born in France,—married an Englishman,—and am now nearly a citizen of the world.—But come, direct the coachman, and I shall give you my name and the business that brings me here."

The good man did as he was desired, not a little impatient for information;—curiosity as we observed in our first acquaintance with him, being one of his few foibles,—for foibles he had, and where is the human being that is without them? She very briefly told her name, and delivered the letters of introduction. He hastily run over the one from Lewis, and had scarcely got to the end when they stopped
before

before the convent gates. Lady Somerset requested he would enter first, and prepare the way for her:—he hastened to the Abbess, and announced the lady by her title, and her supposed affinity to Mademoiselle Hermine.

The information did not afford to the pious lady all the pleasure which he seemed to feel in conveying it; but there was no evading the visit, nor pretence for denying an interview with Hermine. She saw all her fairy schemes were overthrown, if this lady should prove to be her aunt. No doubt Hermine would go with her, and she must bid adieu to all the advantages she hoped to derive from her residence in the convent.

After a little pause, she recovered from her secret vexation, and agreed to receive the lady.—“Hermine was not to know of her claims, nor see her,” she said, “till after
their

their first conversation." The priest returned to conduct Lady Somerset;—mean time the wary Abbess sent for Hermine—"She would see an English Lady," she told her. Hermine presently concluded it must be an acquaintance of the Douglas family.—She was seated near to the bottom of the room, so that neither Father Francis nor her Ladyship could see her immediately; but when the Abbess accosted Lady Somerset, and she turned to be seated, Hermine started up and exclaimed, "Ah! mon Dieu!" The exclamation drew the eyes of her Ladyship, who in the same instant cried out, "Hermine! 'tis my sister, 'tis Hermine!" and fell back in her chair, unable to utter another word, though not absolutely senseless. Hermine had flown towards her, and stood with her hands folded in mute astonishment. The exclamations and emotions of both, left no doubt on the minds of those present as to their affinity. Whilst the Abbess and Sister

Marie were assisting the Lady, Father Francis took the hands of Hermine between his,—“Compose yourself, my child, all will end happily, this lady, we have reason to believe, is nearly related to you.”

“To me, related to me! Ah, I know not that I have one person in the world related to me;—this too an English lady.—How then can it be?” Lady Somerset recovered from her temporary inanimation, rose and clasped her in her arms. “Yes,” said she, embracing her most tenderly, “yes, your looks, my heart, your very voice, all tell me you are my dearest niece, the child of my beloved, much-wronged Hermine!”

“Am I so happy,” cried the transported girl, “your niece, Madam,—indeed, your niece,—you my aunt? Oh! yes, you are so like my dear, dear mother, whose image is in my heart.—Yes, yes, I
am

am your niece!—but how can it be, I never heard I had an aunt;—how can it then possibly be?”

“ ’Tis a long and melancholy story, my love, that I have to relate, and which will be painful for you to hear;—for the present, know that your dear mother and myself were the daughters of the Count De Melian;—I married an English nobleman, Lord Somerset. A family misunderstanding unhappily precluded any intimacy or correspondence between us, after the death of our beloved father. A thousand enquiries have been made after you, for Lord Somerset was left guardian to you;—and great has been my inquietude and anxiety respecting your destiny, though I was not quite hopeless of seeing you, as your father, the late Count ****, by a note, promised you should claim our protection, when you became one-and-twenty.”

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“ Ah!”

“ Ah! ” cried Hermine, interrupting her, “ at that period I am ordered to open a sealed packet, which is to direct my future destiny;—no doubt to make that claim you speak of.—Oh, what an unexpected happiness, to find an aunt,—a sister of my dear, ill-fated mother’s. I have long believed myself an insulated being, without friends or connexions;—but Heaven is most gracious,—on its justice and goodness I have firmly relied, and am abundantly rewarded! ”

The Lady Abbess now thought proper to pay some compliments to the rank of her guest, and her young boarder.—Refreshments were introduced, after which the two ladies retired to the apartment of Hermine.

At the request of Lady Somerset, *Hermine entered on her story.* “ She painfully remembered the fatal day when she
was

was torn from the arms of a mother.—Ah!” said she, “a thousand times she had clasped me to her bosom, imploring the protection of Heaven to preserve her child. She told me I had a father unhappily misled by a vile, base man, to abandon her and myself;—that she trusted a day would come when innocence must triumph over the wicked machinators who had ruined all of her worldly prospects—till then there was a mystery in my fate, and I must live a stranger to my father.

“ This was all the information I had from her, and it sank deep in my young mind; for every word of her’s was dear to my heart, and she was adored throughout the house. I have a faint recollection of living in a great old castle, and of a man who used to come there, and terrify my mamma;—but his person I had no remembrance of, when I found it was the

same cruel wretch who came to the convent, and tore me from her, and I much fear occasioned her death.

“ Oh, how much did I suffer when carried away to a coach, and heard the wretch with me rejoice in his success, and abuse my beloved parent whom we had left to all appearance dead—never will the scene be effaced from my memory.—Nor when I saw my father, and was received with kindness and acknowledged as his child, could all the blandishments of fondness, finery, and attendance, console me for the loss of my darling mother. I wept incessantly—on my knees I entreated to be restored to her arms. My father was offended, he execrated the name of mother, he told me she was worthless, vile, and base—that he hated her, that she had greatly injured my fortune, as well as his; and in a rage, imprecated curses on his head if ever he permitted me to see her more.

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“ I was terrified, but nothing could weaken my firm attachment to a parent whose whole life had passed in tender cares for me,—my heart was true to its first impression. Tears, entreaties, and prayers, were all fruitless; and in a few days after I was placed in a convent, where I had every advantage of education, the greatest respect paid to me, and my dress and expences were unlimited.

“ In a short time my father himself brought me the dreadful tidings of my loved mother’s death, which had effects on me he scarcely expected in one so young, for I was very ill for many days.—It was then he shewed the most unbounded tenderness towards me, and such as could not fail to make some impression on a grateful heart. The Abbess enforced every precept of resignation to the will of Heaven, and pointed out my duty to that earthly parent, whose affection demanded love and

I 4 reverence.

reverence.—It became not a child like me, she said, to judge between a father and a mother; wherever the error lay, it was my duty to honour the author of my being, and now my only parent.

“ But the sufferings and death of my much lamented mother, was an impression that could not be effaced by reason, or lectures;—time, and the unremitting acts of tender affection which I, received from my father, meliorated the excess of my grief, and at length brought me to consider what I owed to my duty, and his kindness. One thing I insisted upon with a firmness that surprised him,—that the man, who he called his dear friend, a Chevalier Soissons, the wretch who had dragged me from the arms of a dying mother, and triumphed in her misery, should never appear before me. The resolution I exerted on this head displeased my father, but finding me immovably obstinate in refusing to see him,

him, he gave way to a steadiness he could not controul, from his unwillingness to give me pain.

“ From that hour I experienced every indulgence that parental tenderness, and unlimited expence, could procure for me; and though I ever deeply deplored the loss of my dear mother, yet as a child I owed the most perfect duty, love, and respect, to a father who idolized me. Of the defects in his character I knew nothing, till the dreadful period when he came to the convent, wild, disordered, and almost frantic..

“ He told the Abbess he was an undone man,—a bankrupt in fortune, reputation, and peace of mind. He paid up my board, and removed me in a carriage to a small lodging in the suburbs of Paris. I was silent, astonished, and terrified.—When he had seated me and shut the door,—“ Hermine,” said he, with a look I shall never
I 5. forget,,

forget, "Hermine, I have been a barbarous assassin,—I have murdered your mother!" I gave a dreadful shriek,—“Oh, my God! murdered!—My mother murdered!”

“Though not destroyed by poison or a poniard, she was killed by grief, and my inhumanity.—Yes,” added he, clasping his hands, “poor unhappy victim to unexampled wickedness, that last blow of tearing her only remaining comfort from her arms for ever, effectually robbed her of life!—My child, your much wronged mother only lived four days from the one when the basest of villains completed his cruel work—whilst I was an associate in his nefarious schemes, a tool, a dupe to his consummate wickedness.”

“He beat his head with his clenched fist, and appeared to be in such a state of distraction, that, terrified to death, I threw myself at his feet, and with all the tenderness

derness inspired by love and fear, besought him to be more calm, to have mercy on himself and me. “*On you,*” cried he, wildly, “*mercy on you!*—I have had none—I have madly, shamefully dissipated all my own property, which ought to have been your’s—I have done worse, I have been a betrayer of my trust, I have ruined my child!—Urge me no more, those looks, so tender, so angelic, are too much like your sainted mother’s—they tear my heart-strings.—Yet do not hate me, my Hermine, though I have deserved it, do not *you* hate me!”—He then burst into a violent paroxysm of tears, which I have great reason to believe preserved his senses.

“When at length restored to more calmness and recollection, he briefly informed me, that a life of dissipation, a system of ruinous vices, falsely called pleasures, had long since robbed him of his own estates, which he had the power to alienate;—

alienate;—and, thro' the baseness of an artful woman, and the advice of one who he had considered as his dearest friend, but who had confessed himself an atrocious villain,—by their instigations and his own vile propensities, he had been induced to break in upon the property of his child, nearly to expend what was entrusted to him for her support, and beggar the daughter, after having destroyed her mother.—The small remnant that his vices and prodigality had left, would scarcely support me till a certain period, when I should no longer be under the direction of an unworthy father.—But he had sworn oaths so sacred, and denounced on his own head imprecations so terrible, that he was compelled to keep me in ignorance of my future destiny, until I became one-and-twenty.

“ He again fell into the most terrible agonies, in which he continued several hours, and which produced a brain fever. What

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I endured of distress and terror cannot be described;—I was alone, among strangers, without knowing a human being I could apply to.—But the efforts of despair often call forth energy of mind, and feeling the necessity of acting, I endeavoured to shake off the lethargy of grief and exert the little fortitude I possessed, to comfort and relieve my suffering parent.

“ Four days he continued in great danger, but Heaven was graciously pleased to restore him to my prayers, and after that period he gradually recovered.—He then informed me, we must quit the country, that he had immolated one victim to the shrine of revenge, for which he was amenable to the law, and for which he had incurred the malediction of Heaven;—and but for my sake, to save *me* from disgrace, he would have given himself up to the laws of his country. The more culpable villain, who had seduced and betrayed him,

was

was dead or dying by an accident that had produced to him the most fatal discoveries. He had been, he found, on the verge of the grave, he was thankful to Heaven that time had been allowed him to repent, and forsake the world. His name must be forgotten.—He had, in the coach, told me, he was known only as Monsieur Themies, at the house he should take me to (and fortunately I had never mentioned any name or title during the time of his illness, when I might have been off my guard).—Not to dwell on trifling circumstances, within three days from his convalescence, we left our lodging and quitted France privately. He informed me, on setting out, that it was for Ardenne Forest he should direct his route, for very particular reasons,—what they were he chose not to reveal, nor did I ever presume to ask him a single question.

“We travelled slowly, he gained no strength, but grew daily more sunk in spirits,

spirits, more emaciated in body,—always accusing himself, and apostrophizing to the spirit of my sainted mother to forgive her murderer.—At Stenay he was so ill we were obliged to rest more than three weeks, which very greatly exhausted our purse, and I knew not then we had any other resources, as my poor father seemed very anxious to be exceedingly frugal.

“ A small red leather trunk he charged me never to part with from my own apartment, the rest of our baggage was in two trunks in the care of a man hired to attend us to the Forest. The first day my father was able to sit up, he wished to give some directions to the servant, and I ordered him to be called.—Judge of our surprise and shock, when the mistress of the house said, with an air of astonishment,—“ Why, Madam, he went early in the morning, as you ordered.” I asked where, and what she meant by my orders?—She answered,
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“ He came to me late at night, and said, the gentleman being better had ordered him to get a post horse, and go on to the Abbey of St. Hubert to apprize the good fathers of his visit to them, and I understood he had orders to convey the trunks there, as two men came for them, and he saw them delivered before he left the house, at break of day, on horseback.”

“ Thus were we robbed of every thing but the small trunk in my chamber.— Messengers were sent over the town and some miles round, but the villain was never traced to this hour. My poor father bore the loss very hardly, it preyed upon his constitution, but he tried to struggle against it, that we might reach the abbey, where he intended to reside, and to place me in the Ursuline Convent, that we might often meet. We had now no baggage, and this second deception in a man he trusted, determined him to proceed on foot to the forest,—

forest,—we changed our clothes for still plainer ones, and began our walk.

“Weak, fatigued, and exhausted, we came to an old ruinous castle, in the forest, where we took shelter in the chapel, for he could proceed no farther.—Some days we remained here, each day he hoped to get better, but I saw his strength decaying under the exertion of his spirits. Our provisions were just exhausted, and my situation was dreadful indeed, when Providence graciously succoured us in a most eventful hour, by directing a young peasant to view the building, after a horrid tempestuous night, when we expected every moment to be entombed under the ruins of the castle.”

Here Lady Somerset, taking the hand of Hermine and tenderly kissing it, said, “What followed that fortunate discovery, my dear niece, I have heard briefly related by Mr. Berthier, your preserver,—at present we will

will talk no more of the past.—The penitence and death of your father has disarmed my resentment; for we should not be vindictive beyond the grave, if human frailty cannot subdue it when the object who has injured us still exists.—Poor man! his suffering must have been great, when conscience, so long silenced, spake in thunder to his feelings. O! my dear Hermine, always remember that it is guilt alone that can make us truly wretched!—Misfortunes may press hard upon us, sorrow may lacerate the heart, internal anguish may, for a time, subdue our spirits, and injure our health,—but all these evils time will meliorate and a patient endurance will overcome.—'Tis the reproaches of conscience, the stings of remorse alone that must be ever-enduring and follow us to the grave!”

“O! my dear aunt,” exclaimed Hermine, bursting into tears, “my dear repentant father has, I humbly trust, received
mercy!

mercy!—Penitence like his will not be rejected by an all-merciful Being.” “On that hope let us rest my dear child,—compose yourself,—you have now a second mother, to whom you are inexpressibly dear, and with whom you will henceforth reside.—Ah! had my beloved Lord Somerset lived to see you thus, how great would have been his transports, for he dearly loved your mother.—But no more of this,” said she, brushing off a falling tear, “the Supreme director of events in this sublunary world, best knows what is most fitting for us.”

“I have been very ungrateful,” said Hermine, “in my own joy I forgot what was due to my friend and preserver—that good Lewis, to whom I am indebted for every comfort.—How is he, my dear aunt, and by what fortunate occurrence did he become known to you?” Lady Somerset briefly related their accidental encounter, and its consequences, mixed with warm praises of the person, manners,

ners, good sense, and modesty of young Berthier.—“ But,” added she, “ has he not then informed you of those particulars in the letter I brought to you?” “ No, indeed,” answered Hermine, “ a few simple lines of respectful congratulation, that in Lady Somerset I should meet a relation, a friend, and protectress,—and a hope modestly expressed, of paying his respects to me in England, were all the contents of his short letter.”

“ I am really astonished,” said her Ladyship, “ at the manners and understanding of that young man.—Nature has done more for him, than high birth and a finished education, with many of our modern young men of fashion. Our obligations to him are unspeakably great, but there is a disinterestedness and modest dignity about him, that repulse all pecuniary reward;—we must, therefore, find some way of gratifying ourselves, without hurting his feelings.”

ings.” The heart of Hermine assented to this sentiment, whilst she thanked her aunt for her generous consideration. She then mentioned the contents of her leather trunk, and the parcel which she had entrusted to the good Father Francis.

“ All our business can soon be settled,” returned Lady Somerset, “ I am impatient to take you from hence, and propose going to Brussels, where I have appointed my dear son to meet us;—there too I must furnish you with some clothes, for I suppose your stock is very slender,” “ Yes,” said Hermine, smiling, “ I have only two black dresses, terribly made, procured for me by the good old Agnes,—and the country dress in which I walked to the forest.”

“ Well, my dear, I shall settle every thing with the Abbess, as you may do with the good priest;—and some acknowledgement

ledge must be made to him, in a way that he cannot refuse to accept.—I know very well, what articles will prove agreeable to him.”

We will not dwell on trivial occurrences, or prolix descriptions of the parting scenes between Hermine, the Abbess, and community, whose charitable wishes would have sent Lady Somerset to purgatory, rather than have seen her there to rob them of such a boarder,—neither shall we detail the contradictory feelings of the good old Father Francis, whose joy at Hermine's prospect of happiness was mixed with an affectionate regret at parting with her for ever. Hermine's heart overflowed at her eyes, when she pressed his venerable hand, and received his blessings;—it was a very painful moment to her.—In the convent she left no one to lament, for there was none she regarded but Sister Therese, and to her she made

made some few presents that she knew would be acceptable.

We shall not trace them in their journey, but set them down quietly at Brussels, where they proposed to rest until the arrival of Lord Somerset;—and from whence Hermine wrote to her friend Fidelity, of the fortunate change in her circumstances, and the most pleasing hope of embracing her very shortly in England.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.



MR. Douglas and his suite travelled very slowly, for they were frequently obliged to rest a day or two, from the fatigue he experienced; and Lewis with much pain observed that neither his strength or spirits derived any advantage from the journey. The nearer they approached to England, the greater was the depression that seemed to fix on his mind; in vain were Lewis's efforts to cheer and enliven his friend,—he was alike insensible to all amusement, or change of objects. When
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at length they reached Calais,—he was so exhausted and so low, that Lewis requested him to stop there a few days to recover from his fatigue. After a moment's pause Douglas answered with some firmness.

“No, let us proceed, stopping here will avail nothing—I must go, I wish to see my father; I believe I have no time to lose, my weakness daily encreases, my own follies, irregularities, and strong passions, have destroyed my health.—Oh, Lewis! you will despise me, you have said as much, and I detest myself, but my reason is enslaved by my heart. Volatile, giddy, unsteady in every pursuit, and at an age when the influence of a strong passion rarely holds any length of dominion, I take shame to myself when I confess 'tis this passion for a worthless object that drags me to the grave.”—“Dear Douglas!” cried Lewis, “you nourish your disease by dwelling on

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it—drive but the cause from your mind and the effect will cease.”

“It is impossible,” returned he, “I have tried every effort to no purpose; vile, detestable as Eleanora is, I doat upon her—and were she this moment to return with her former fascinating tenderness, I know I should press her to my heart, forget her baseness, and even resolve to marry her, if she would accept my hand.—Oh, that I *had married* when first I knew her, before she was seen by that cursed Count.”—“You astonish and afflict me,” returned Lewis, “but I will yet hope, that when restored to the bosom of your family, more worthy objects will efface the image of a bad, licentious woman.” “Your hope will prove as forlorn, as the trial will be fruitless,” answered Douglas; “however, let us proceed, I am eager to see my father: Poor man! placid as he is, both by nature and
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and habit, I fear his heart will be lacerated when he beholds his son."

Lewis endeavoured to change the subject by remarking on the occurrences in their journey, and anticipating the strange figure he should make on his arrival in a foreign country, equally a stranger to the language, customs, and manners of its inhabitants. "You must quickly fall in love," said Douglas, faintly smiling, "I should never have troubled myself to acquire the little Italian I know, had it not been the native language of Eleanora.—Love is the best master, his lessons are more successful than the dry methodical rules of grammar from an old starch pedagogue—the one penetrates to the heart, the other forces itself slowly to the brain without creating much interest or attention."—"Ah!" returned Lewis, in the same tone, "but I fear the instructor you propose would teach me a lesson infinitely

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more destructive to my peace than loss of time, and that the certain evil would greatly overbalance the *un*-certain good;—from a language master if I have but little to hope, I shall have still less to dread—my patience may be tried, but my heart will not be wounded.”

“ All this sounds mighty well,” answered Douglas, “ but you know as little of your own heart, as of the country you are going to; and one short hour may overturn all this fine reasoning and prudent caution. The English ladies are in general extremely to your taste; I know not whether they possess more *real* modesty and virtue than the ladies on the Continent, but at least they have the *semblance* of it.—Delicacy and modesty were the characteristics of an English female in days of old, but I believe they are something degenerated since the time of their old grandams—and many exceed in licentiousness

ousness the very worst of the Italians.”—
 “ And do you call this being extremely to my taste?” said Lewis. — “ I speak of particular instances, and judge from the manners of many I have seen; but I do allow that my countrywomen in general are more captivating, though not perhaps so *alluring*, as the French and Italian ladies. And, very possibly, my youth, and the society I mixed with, gave me but few opportunities of knowing the most estimable characters; yet still I know enough of them, to be assured a lad of sentiment like you will be pleased with our English belles.”

“ Very well,” returned Lewis, “ I am already prejudiced in their favour; but I shall have little time or opportunity to study female characters, and am too insignificant in myself to attract their notice—a low born foreigner will have no claims to their attention.”—“ You are in an error there, I assure you,” said Douglas, “ the

pride of aristocracy is not carried to such lengths in England, as to render persons of good sense and discrimination blind to the merit of any individual if brought forward to their notice. Talents and manners will always command attention and respect—and persons of the highest rank will bow to the aristocracy of genius.”

“That is very possible,” returned Lewis, “shining abilities may force their way and command respect; but I am speaking of an obscure individual without talents, one who has every thing to learn, nothing to communicate.”—“Well, well,” said Douglas, “trust to chance, you have nothing to fear; a *modest foreigner* will be a recommendation alone for its singularity, had you no other pretensions.”

Here their conversation ended, on being informed the wind was fair, and the packet ready to sail; and contrary to the wish of
Lewis,

Lewis, Douglas determined to go on board directly.

Our travellers arrived safe in London, and Douglas ordered the carriage to set them down at the Royal Hotel, in Pall-Mall, from whence he sent a messenger to apprise his father of his arrival, not having spirits to encounter an abrupt appearance at the house. He was prevailed upon to take pretty freely of refreshments, to strengthen his mind and his spirits; and when the carriage of Mr. Douglas stopped at the door, Lewis hastened to meet, and prepare him for an interview, lest his emotions on seeing his altered son should affect the poor invalid too much.—Mr. Douglas warmly thanked Lewis for his kind precaution, and followed him. As the young man was rising to receive his father, he rushed into his arms,—“Thank Heaven, my beloved Frederic, that I see you safe in England, and much better in looks than I
K 4 expected!”

expected!"—This seasonable observation caused Douglas to exert himself; and after the most affectionate expressions on both sides, he asked for his sister.—"She is well, God be praised, and impatient to see you. Your kind letter," added Mr. Douglas, turning to Lewis, "for which I can never enough thank you, came in time to save me from the heaviest, the most irreparable of all misfortunes."

"You alarm me greatly," exclaimed Frederic. "And you will condemn me as severely," returned his father; "but 'tis a mortification I have deserved, and will not shrink from, to confess to you both, that I was on the point of marrying that too beautiful, that infamous Countess, whose character you partly developed, and who has since confirmed the very worst of your suspicions."—"Marrying, marrying Eleonora!" cried Douglas, "monstrous! impossible!—She dared not, she could not be

be so utterly abandoned as to think of it.
—Heavens! *marry her!*”

“ You are so much agitated, my son, that I will not enter into the particulars of my unpardonable folly now — your sister shall relate it all; let us at present think only of our happiness in meeting thus, so much more to my comfort than I dared to expect. Mr. Berthier,” added he, taking the hand of Lewis with a friendly shake, “ in my house you will consider yourself at home, my best services shall be exerted in every way that I can be useful to you.”

Lewis modestly acknowledged his sense of this kindness, and they shortly after proceeded to Hanover-Square, with much less appearance of agitation on the part of young Douglas than could have been hoped for. But his apparent tranquillity was less the effect of ease or satisfaction, than of astonishment and deep reflection.—All his fa-

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culties

culties were locked up in mute wonder, reflecting on what he could not comprehend,—the intended marriage of his father.—If it were possible to believe that Eleanora could be so abandoned as to entertain a thought of such a connexion, she must be the worst of all vile women, and he would, nay, he was sure that he *could* drive her from his heart forever. But, then again, what was become of the Count?—How was it that she was introduced as his wife so very lately, and now received the addresses of another man?—Lost in a whirl of reflection, they stopped at the house, and were presently welcomed by the lovely and interesting Fidelia.

The volatile spirits of Frederic Douglas, no longer in that turbulence of juvenile gaiety, which took in a hundred objects at once, without dwelling on any,—who, in the novelty of the scene at the convent, and the amusement he was in a moment planning

ing for himself, had scarcely time to contemplate his new-found sister, otherwise than as a d——d fine girl,—was extremely struck by her appearance and manners,—so elegant, so soft and affectionate, that he gazed on her with a delight that for some moments superseded all other ideas. Nor did Lewis view her with that abstractedness of attention he generally threw on other females.—He had seen her but once before, yet he was sensible of her great improvement in a very short space of time.—A few months had done wonders, and tho' she doubtless derived some advantages from dress, yet her own native loveliness was sufficiently attractive.

Fidelia's vanity, for she was a female, and had been taught to estimate the value of beauty, by the unbounded admiration she had met with,—her vanity, however, in this instance, received no gratification;—the joy of seeing a brother had swallowed up

up all lesser considerations, and she was so absorbed in contemplating the ravages which sickness and imbecility of mind had made in the once handsome person of Douglas, that she paid very little attention to the visible admiration her own person excited.

The young man could not be insensible to the affectionate cares of his father and sister,—he strove to be cheerful and talk on desultory subjects; and Lewis began to entertain a hope, that being with those tender relatives, and obliged to make an effort towards cheerfulness, the very endeavour might grow into habit and have a good effect upon his constitution.

They separated at an early hour, and the following morning Lewis found himself the first that entered the breakfast room.—He was presently joined by Fidelia, who asked him a number of questions relative to

to her brother, and of his intimacy with Eleanora. The subject being of a delicate nature, he chose to refer her to her brother, from whom she might expect an unreserved communication,—at the same time taking the liberty to enquire if the Countess was a widow? “A widow!” cried she, “I do not believe she ever was a wife — tho’ she told a strange story of a former wife coming to England after the Count, whose claims he could not evade, as she was introduced by letters to the Ambassador;—which claims had caused his sudden disappearance, leaving her a much wronged and cruelly deceived woman.

“On their first arrival in England, she was introduced and received as his wife,” continued Fidelia, “I met her several times at the house of a friend;—I was charmed with her, for she really is a most fascinating woman; we became well acquainted, and when she understood I was
sister

sister to Frederic, she spared no pains to engage my regards, and to become intimate with my father, whose esteem she was very desirous to obtain. She came to us one morning, apparently in agonies of distress, said she was the most abused and most ill-treated of women, and then related the fine story I have told you;—with the additional circumstances, that having resided in a ready furnished house, in Wimpole-Street, the day preceding his departure he had gone and discharged every demand upon him up to that very day, leaving orders with every one to claim and receive the several articles of plate, china, &c. which they had been accommodated with..

“ In short, he was gone,—the broker came to take possession of his house,—the tradespeople of their property,—and tho’ she was not destitute of money, yet prudence and feeling revolted against engaging herself to continue an expensive establishment, that
must

must considerably injure her;—she had, therefore, flown distractedly from the house, with only two faithful attendants,—and now, abandoned, deceived and wretched,—in a strange country,—her reputation lost, however innocently forfeited by her, she had to seek a temporary asylum, till she could return to her own country, and bury her wrongs and her miseries in a cloyster for the short remnant of her days.

“ This fine romance, for such it proved to be, accompanied by a shower of tears from the most beautiful eyes I ever saw, had an immediate effect upon the softness of my father’s disposition.—He offered his house, and every accommodation to this charming mourner,—besought her to receive consolation from her friends, who must all esteem her as an innocent, much-wronged woman. I cannot attempt to repeat one quarter of what passed between them

them, of compliments, condolences, offers of service, and the overflowing gratitude she expressed in return.—But to shorten my story, she and her servants fixed their abode here, in a few days after my father had written to Frederic. I know not how it was that I could not feel so perfectly satisfied with her relation, as my father appeared to be; but it was strange that a nobleman should introduce this lady in public by his name, if another wife had claims upon him, since their rank and situation must throw them into general notice, and inevitably lead to a discovery of his former marriage, among persons of his own nation and acquaintance. I hope, and believe I am neither suspicious, selfish, or uncharitable;—I was also almost a stranger to the world, and to the artifices of designing people,—yet 'tis most certain, though wholly unaccountable to myself, that from the moment she became an inmate of my father's house, my regards insensibly declined.

clined. I pictured to myself my own feelings, in a situation so deplorable as her's, and shuddered at the portrait.—I examined her under that impression, there was nothing heartfelt;—a volubility of tongue, much violent declamation on her wrongs, but it was rage, and a shew of words,—no real sorrow—no painful humiliation, that called for a tender commiseration of her unfortunate destiny. On the contrary, she dressed superbly, threw out the most attractive graces, paid a world of delicate compliments to my father, and when she saw him charmed by her really beautiful person, and gratified by her attentions,—then the scene changed,—then she would lament her forlorn state in a strange country,—execrate the cruel wretch who had imposed upon her artless affection,—boast of the offers she had refused,—and wringing her hands, deplore the horror she must experience in returning to her own country.

“ For

“ For the first week I was a witness to these lamentations and declamatory sorrows; but after that period my company was not sought for. She looked coldly on me, treated me with a forced respect, and studied civility. My father and she had long private conferences, and novice as I was, in the language of the eyes, or in the feelings of the heart, I quickly perceived a secret understanding—a mysterious and studied concealment of their sentiments;—for when I was present they spake little, but their looks said a great deal. I grew extremely uneasy—I applied to the friend who had introduced me to this *ci-devant* Countess, but fearful of saying too much, my vague enquiries procured but slender information; for she seemed to know very little of her real rank or character, but being passionately fond of foreigners, had sought the acquaintance, taking her respectability on trust, from the brilliancy of their establishment and title.

“ Whilst

“ Whilst I was thus distressed in my mind, one morning my father entered my dressing room, and after a short preface, said,—“ My dear Fidelia, you have never known the happiness of having a mother,—the one nature gave you inhumanly disowned you. I am solicitous to repair that misfortune by giving you an amiable, tender parent, in an affectionate and sincere friend.—In one word I intend to marry the adorable, much-wronged woman, who honours us by her regard;—in restoring her to society as my wife, I shall silence malice, and defeat calumny!” Guess my astonishment and concern at this declaration.—“ Marry, Sir, you marry this Italian lady!—my mother so very recently dead!”

“ What then?” answered he, quickly, “ she had long ceased to consider me as a husband, and her whole study had been to torment, rule, and contradict me. I owe nothing

nothing to her memory, and for the talk of the world, 'tis not worth giving *one* hour of happiness to obtain its sufferage, or deprecate its malice.—The mere babble of a day is of little moment;—I have made up my mind, next week you will share with me the supreme pleasure of restoring peace to the mind of an innocent sufferer, and the relative terms of mother and daughter will only confirm a sincere and tender affection that she feels for you.”

“ What could I oppose to a resolution so firmly adopted? I saw all my expected happiness in the undivided affection of my father, on the point of being torn from me by an artful woman, nor was it a selfish consideration only that distressed me;—little as I know of the world, and still less of intriguing, unprincipled women, I had discernment enough to penetrate through the veil that love had thrown over her to fascinate my poor father.

“ But

"But my opinion weighed nothing against her charms, and I saw the magnificent preparations for a hasty wedding on the eve of being concluded, without the power to oppose or prevent them. I once mentioned my brother's interest,—I was cut short with, "My charming Eleanora disdains selfish views, neither Frederic nor you will be injured by this marriage, which I expected from your boasted affection to me, and the friendship you professed for her, would have been perfectly accordant with your wishes for my happiness."

"I was silenced;—the following day, (on the morrow of which they were to have been united,) your letter arrived.

"We were seated at breakfast,—"A letter from Florence," said my father. I saw his intended bride change colour.—"Did you write to advise Mr. Douglas to go to the Spa?" asked she. "I did, but that

that letter could not have reached him when this left Florence;—'tis Mr. Berthier's hand, I hope Frédéric is not worse."—"You seem flurried," said she, "will you permit me to open it?" "We will finish our breakfast," returned he, "and read it in the library." I was vexed and hurt to see my father put it into his pocket.—In that moment a servant entered to acquaint her, that a French milliner and mantua-maker waited her orders,—she rose, "Mr. Douglas, I will join you in the library, in ten minutes." "My dear Sir," said I, "do pray open the letter, something tells me it is of importance,—do pray read it here." "What, after engaging Eleanora to read it in the library?—Fidelia, do you know what you ask?" "Alas! Sir," I replied, "I know too well the poor Fidelia has no longer a right to make any request, she has lost all interest in the bosom of her father!" Whether it was my countenance or tone of voice that touched him, I know not,

not, but kindly taking my hand, “No, my dear child, you have lost nothing,—you are as dear to me as ever, and, to gratify you, I *will* open the letter, tho’ it will cost me an apology, which I shall place to your account.”

“He directly broke the seal, cast his eyes over it as if preparing to read, started and his hand trembled.—Shocked at his agitation, I cried out, “Ah! Sir, my poor brother!” He minded me not, but sprang from his chair,—“Impossible!—What an infamous calumny,—it cannot be, ’tis impossible!” Tortured by fears of I knew not what, I was advancing towards him, when Eleanora entered,—she saw the letter in his hand, and beheld his agitation,—she seemed transfixed,—he ran and grasped her arm,—“Madam,” said he, with the strongest emotions of voice and gesture I ever witnessed, “Madam, read, read, do yourself justice, and let me cast from my heart

heart the unworthy aspersers of innocence.—Good Heavens! if ——, —but, no it cannot be,—it is impossible!” Pale as death, trembling, and silent, she took the letter, but could scarcely have read six lines before she tore the paper and flung it into the fire (which had been kindled at her request, being very susceptible of cold). I happened to be close to the spot, and, as she turned in a violent rage to my father, I snatched up the pieces, which were barely singed, and put them into my pocket.

“The rage that took possession of her, threw her totally off her guard, her whole person exhibited the fury, and her language and execrations cannot be repeated. My father was actually terrified,—the loves and graces had flown,—he saw a woman whose passions and violence far exceeded every thing he had seen in my late mother. She ran herself out of breath, denouncing curses and vengeance on the two vile calumniators,

lumniators at Florence, and insisted that Frederic and his profligate associate, who thus aspersed virtue that had been superior to all their joint arts, should be banished from his house and presence for ever ; or she would instantly break off the treaty of marriage, and accept a nobleman who had offered her his hand a very few days before.

“ My father had sank into a chair overcome by her violence, and the tumult of his own feelings. At length, when words could no longer be articulate, her rage vented itself in a torrent of tears, which I saw moved him greatly. For my part, I was all amazement, and dying with curiosity to read the letter. My father arose,—

“ Either I have no longer a son, or we are parted for ever, if he could be base enough to employ the pen of another person, and oblige that person to join in a dark scheme to ruin the character of an innocent lady—I hold him unworthy of my heart, or

any future concern.—But if, dreadful if, *there is* a shadow of truth in the contents of that fatal letter, then, Madam, think, think what dishonour, what wretchedness, you were preparing for me !—But it cannot be, it is impossible, you cannot be the woman that letter describes.—Oh, Madam, clear yourself, be candid, tell me *all* your story. I will write to Florence, I will delay my marriage till I clear your fame, and by proofs overwhelm those wretches with confusion and remorse.—Yes, I will punish *them*, and your character shall be unsullied before you honour me with your hand.”

“Then, Sir,” returned she, with an air of scorn, “know, that I refuse my hand to you on such conditions.—If you dare to doubt my honour, if you hesitate between your base son and me, and will not place implicit confidence in my truth, by marrying me to-morrow, I will now, this very night, withdraw myself from your house,
and

and treat you with the contempt you merit, and take ample vengeance on the two profligates at Florence."

"I trembled for the resolution of my poor father, I saw he was in agonies; but honour triumphed over love, and the bare possibility that some credit *might* be attached to the contents of the letter made him shudder. "Madam, too charming Eleanora, spare me the dreadful alternative. —I doubt not your innocence, I cannot look on you and believe such crimes possible; but it becomes your character, and mine, to have your fame cleared by unquestionable testimony, that I may be justified in my choice of you, and for the reprobation of my son which *must follow* the conviction of your truth."

"And this," said she, her eyes flashing fire, and her whole person agitated, "*this* is your determined resolution!" My father

L 2

bowed,

bowed, he could not speak.—“ And this son of your’s is on his way to England?” —“ I will not receive him if he has wronged you.” —“ *If* he has wronged me—you doubt it then—you will wait for proofs?” —“ As a man of honour, as a parent, though my heart is lacerated, my mind racked and perplexed, I ought, I must do so.”

“ Weak, shallow, wretch! then I have done with you.—I go, I fly to that *generous candid* nobleman, who scorns to suspect the woman he loves because she has been unfortunate.” —“ Oh, Eleanora!” exclaimed my father, “ do not be rash—a short, a very short time will restore our peace.” —“ *Mine*,” returned she, contemptuously, “ is not broken; but vengeance shall appease my wrongs! Adieu, Sir, adieu, my scheme of gaining your hand has failed; but let your son, and that
impertinent

impertinent forester beware—I may yet retaliate!”

“ With the look of a fiend, she quitted the room. My father clasped his hands, —“ I have lost her!—Oh, if I find *she is* wronged, dearly shall those destroyers of my happiness pay for their vile falsehoods!” I then produced the torn letter, rescued from the flames, and besought him to read it through; that it was impossible any deception or calumny could be intended, as they were perfect strangers to his design of marrying—it was simply to guard me against an improper intimacy. This remark struck him, he perused the letter attentively,—“ I fear,” said he, sighing, “ there is some truth in this account.”—“ You fear it, Sir?—would it then please you that my brother and Mr. Berthier should be villains?”—“ Oh, Fidelia!” answered he, “ Eleanora has fast hold of my heart—such a form, such a mind cannot

be so vile as she is painted in that letter.” —“Neither her form, or her mind appeared any way to her credit in the violence of her passion; nor was it a proof of her innocence when she endeavoured to destroy the letter.” —“You are right,” returned he, “she has indeed betrayed a violence, both in action and language, that I did not think her capable of. — But where can she be gone to? — pray ring and enquire.”

“I saw he struggled to repress the agonies he felt; and I endured little less for him, than he did for an unworthy woman. The servant informed us a hackney-coach had been sent for by the Countess, for she retained her title in the family; and he understood that her female attendants were packing up trunks to leave the house. My father, irresolute and half distracted, paced about the room in silence. — “Would you wish me to see her, Sir?” — “Yes,” answered

answered he, quickly, “go, try your influence,—tell her I am wretched; entreat, beseech her to remain here, and justify herself.”

“I withdrew, and sent up my name—the servant returned with an open note,—“I disclaim all further acquaintance with your family, but on one condition—implicit confidence. If your father comes repentant and sues for my hand, I will return his reliance on my truth by giving it to him to-morrow morning—if he doubts or hesitates, within one hour I leave his house and see him no more.—He must renounce his son or me.”

“I cannot express the indignation I felt, it was visible in my countenance when I gave the paper into my father’s hand.—“Cruel woman, equally proud and unjust! —No, I will not renounce my son unheard —my heart may be tortured, but I will not

L 4

forget

forget that I am a father." I was so rejoiced at a determination so little expected that I burst into tears, and pressed his hand to my bosom. He embraced me,—
"My dear Fidelia, I am ashamed of my weakness; I will retire.—Yes, my child, be assured I will remember I have children who claim my first consideration." He hastily left me; and soon after, that insolent, abandoned woman left the house.

"My father met me at the dinner table—he eat little and spake less, yet was extremely kind in his manner to me. He soon left me to my unpleasant reflections, when they were interrupted by a request from a female servant of Eleanora's to be admitted to speak to me. I shuddered, I dreaded a conciliatory message, that might have an effect upon the mind of my father, but ordered her in however. I have already been too prolix, and shall not therefore repeat her information at length. I found
she

she had quarrelled with her lady, and in revenge came to develop her real character to me,—so little can the profligate depend upon their associates or servants. This woman did not live with her when she left Florence, she was hired in France, because she understood and spake English well. She told me the Count had utterly disclaimed her as his wife, that her boundless extravagance, and shameless intimacy with a servant she had brought over, had so enraged him that they had perpetual disputes; and soon after their arrival in England he had formed another connexion, though he continued to live with her until their last quarrel and final separation, he then publicly declared she was not his wife, but a mistress, who lived with him on a settlement.—He paid all his bills, discharged the house, and left her with the utmost indifference and contempt. After the most violent execrations, she said to my informant, she had one card more to

L 5.

play.

play, she was certain Mr. Douglas greatly admired her—that he was a weak man, and she had no doubt, but with proper management, she might become his wife, which would be a glorious coup de main, and a delightful triumph over Frederic Douglas and his sentimental sister.

“ This was the substance of the woman’s information, to which she added, that an English nobleman, my Lord E. had often paid her lady much attention, and she believed that she meant to place herself under his protection. Every syllable of this I reported to my father to effect his cure from a disgraceful passion. He was equally shocked and astonished that such a character could exist in a female; and in part it produced the effect I wished for. Within three days after, the papers announced the ci-devant Austrian Countess as the chere amie of Lord E. who was seen driving her in his pheaton through

through all the public streets and roads about town. Then of course my father no longer retained a single doubt of her infamy, but returned thanks to Heaven for his most fortunate escape from the disgrace of her sex."

Here Fidelia closed her long narration, which was not all delivered *previous* to the breakfast—she had been obliged to break off, and meet Lewis by appointment in the library, to finish her tale. Little did she suppose the vile Eleanora had been actually the mistress of Frederic.—Lewis had mentioned her as "a woman of known intrigue and abandoned morals, as the mistress of the Count, and of a character so infamous, that it must irreparably injure and disgrace Miss Douglas if she was seen as her companion. — And this account Frederic pledged his honour for the truth, as she was well known to him."



Fidelia

Fidelia again enquired by what means Eleanora became so well known to her brother,—“ You will excuse my freedom with you, Mr. Berthier,” said she, “ but the kind regard which I have heard my charming friend Hermine express for you and your worthy mother, and the friendly attentions you have shewn to my brother, lead me to consider you as an old acquaintance.” “ You do me great honour, Madam,” replied he, “ but I think you will pardon me, if, as to your question, I refer you to Mr. Douglas.—Happy, most happy is it for all the family, that the dreadful intended marriage was broken off. I shudder to think any woman could be so vile as that abandoned Eleanora;—but if you please, we will drop the subject.”

“ And change it to one equally interesting, the amiable and much valued friend I just now mentioned—can you tell me any thing of her?” With great delight,

light, Lewis communicated to her his accidental acquaintance with Lady Somerset, and the expected happiness she hoped to enjoy in the recovery of her long lost niece, with their very probable return together in a short time. Fidelia was transported,—“Oh,” cried she, “of how many hours of happiness have you deprived me, by concealing till now this information so interesting to my heart!”

“I hope,” returned Lewis, “that I can plead not guilty to the charge, since till this hour, that your narrative was finished, I had no opportunity of communicating it.”

“I stand corrected,” said she, smiling, “and you have genteelly reprimanded me for my talkativeness; but indeed, indeed you know not what exquisite delight I feel in the hope of seeing her in England.—Ah! why does she not write, and confirm this hope?” Lewis “had no doubt, but the *Lady Hermine* would do so.” “*Lady Hermine*,”

Hermine," repeated Fidelia, "that's true, she is no longer an unknown, unprotected orphan.—Ah! Mr. Berthier, what a change in our circumstances since I had first the happiness of knowing that invaluable friend! —The advantages I derived from her instructions and conversation are incalculably great."

Lewis was charmed by the grateful affection of Fidelia. "How beautiful she is!" thought he, "what an amiable young woman! she must certainly have an excellent heart, since she loves goodness, and feels gratitude.—What a pair of friends! and how highly am I honoured in their notice!" The entrance of Mr. Douglas and his son, interrupted his reverie, which had excited some emotions in the bosom of Fidelia, from the language of his eyes.

"Mr. Berthier," said the elder Douglas, "I have learnt from my son some part
of

of the infinite obligations we both owe to your unremitting attentions, to which in all probability I am indebted for his life;—nay more, for he frankly ascribes a reformation in his mind and manners, in great part to the humiliation he endured in your acknowledged superiority in natural good sense, and propriety of conduct.”

“ Dear Sir,” cried Lewis, more abashed than pleased, “ Mr. Douglas does less than justice to himself, and very greatly over-rates my services.” “ ’Tis thus that modest merit judges of itself,” returned Mr. Douglas, “ however you must allow us to hold our own opinion, and act from our feelings.—But more of this another time.

“ I have been hearing a tale of horror, —your friend has not spared himself in his account of that detestable woman, whom, but for the kind interference of Providence, I should have made my wife.

What

What a fiend in an angelic form!—what her motives could be for such an infernal scheme, I know not; for it does not appear to me that Frederic ever offended her, consequently not even revenge for an injury, could have given rise to a design so infamous—so horrible.”

“ Speak of her no more,” said young Douglas, “ I detest her very name;—but to her unheard of atrocity, I am, I hope, indebted for my cure. — My health has sank under the disease of mind, returning peace may possibly have the same influence in a different operation.”

They all joined cordially in the wish, and breathed the same hope;—and soon after they went to air in Mr. Douglas’s carriage, that Lewis might call at Lady Somerset’s house, and deliver her letter to her Maitre d’Hotel.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.



THE steward had already received a letter from his lady, written previous to her leaving Florence, with orders to receive Mr. Berthier with respect, and to prepare every accommodation for him as one of her best friends;—but the Douglas family would not admit of his leaving them, and therefore Lewis only requested to be informed of his lady's health whenever he should have a letter from the Continent. They drove to Hyde Park which happened to be pretty full of company, and our peasant

peasant was equally astonished and delighted with the novelty of the scene, and the charms of the English ladies, whose style of beauty was more to the taste of Lewis, than the highly coloured faces of the Italians, and French ladies.

They had driven three times round the ride, and were near the gate intending to return, when their carriage was obliged to give way to a superb phaeton and four, which drove furiously through, but not without the lady in it being recognized by the party in the coach, as the infamous Eleanora;—neither did Douglas or Berthier escape *her* notice, both their heads bending towards the window,

Lewis uttered an exclamation, and in turning, beheld his young friend extremely agitated, and pale as death. The elder Douglas was not unmoved, but indignation

tion seemed to be his predominant feeling. Fidelia was shocked at her effrontery, and hurt to see its effects on her relatives;—but all for some moments seemed wrapped in their own reflections.

Mr. Douglas was the first to break the general silence. “Shall we lengthen our ride through Kensington?” “No,” replied Frederic, “I feel very unwell, if you please I would rather go home.”—When they alighted the younger Douglas took the arm of Lewis, and drew him into a private room. Sinking into a chair, he exclaimed, “Oh, how I hate and despise myself!”

“Do not indulge such an injurious idea. I am not surprised that you should be disconcerted on seeing a woman of such vile principles whom you once loved.” “Once loved,” repeated Douglas, “oh, Berthier! still, still I doat on her,

her,—she is fixed in my heart.—I vainly hoped a conviction of her uncommon baseness must have eradicated every tender sentiment;—but the passing glance shot from her beautiful eyes, have convinced me of the fallacy of that hope.—Oh, how beautiful she looked! Why have not I a fortune to gratify her desires, and make me happy?”

Lewis, equally astonished and grieved for this weak young man, whose passion for an unworthy woman, no conviction of her baseness, no judgment, no reason could controul, stood for some moments looking on him with the sincerest compassion.—Before he had recovered to speak, Mr. Douglas entered, “Frederic,” said he, visibly agitated, “I trust you will not think me indifferent or insensible to the pleasure a parent must feel in the return of a beloved son,—if I forego my own gratification, and seek to restore your health
and

and peace, by promoting a little excursion for you and Mr. Berthier, to visit your uncle, Lord Douglas; who is so entirely crippled and enfeebled by the gout, as to make it impossible for him to travel, and therefore your visit is a compliment he has a right to expect."

"I do not wish to leave town yet," answered Frederic, languidly, "but if you command me, Sir, —" "*Command you,*" returned Mr. Douglas, "no, my son, I speak my wishes only;—if you are not yet sufficiently recovered from your fatigue of travelling, take another week, and in the mean time we will go to Richmond."—"No, no," exclaimed the poor youth, "I must have rest, I cannot leave town,—to air in the Park is enough for me." Mr. Douglas mildly replied, "Use your own pleasure, my son," but he turned his eyes on Lewis, as he left the room, with an expressive look that spake the anguish of his mind.

Lewis

Lewis was still silent, when young Douglas, looking attentively on him, said, "I can translate your thoughts, because I know what I deserve they should be;—but argument avails nothing; I have struggled with this fatal love till it has destroyed my health, as well as my peace.—I know all you can or ought to say, for I have said every thing to myself that reason, principle, honour, and pride can suggest, against a shameful and criminal passion.—Pity the weakness of my heart, and that hereditary imbecility of mind which has made me but too closely copy my father, in being the slave of a woman." "But," said Lewis, "you will pardon me if I observe, that the example should have a different effect, and warn you from indulging a weakness so destructive. Your mother, I have heard you say, had great firmness of mind,—why not take a lesson from her?" "I have already told you," answered he, "that I resemble both in disposition—weakness
and

and obstinacy;—in short, this passion,—give it what name you please, it cannot be too harsh, makes my fate, and stamps it with misery and death,—for I cannot live without Eleanora!” He then arose, and walked feebly into another room.

Lewis immediately sought an interview with Fidelia, he found her much agitated by contradictory emotions of joy and sorrow.—On entering the house she had been presented with a letter from Hermine, dated from Brussels, with a concise account of the fortunate change in her situation, and her hope of being in England in a few weeks. Scarcely had she perused this most welcome letter when her father entered, and, visibly affected, expressed his fears for the life of his beloved son. “He is certainly in a dangerous way,” said he, “and the air of London cannot be favourable to him;—the transient view of that vile woman, to-day, has hurt him greatly.—

What

What can be done?—He will not leave town, and whenever he goes out will be in danger of such another encounter.—I confess that I was shocked not a little, but poor Frederic suffers still more!—Fidelia, my dear child, think what can be done for your brother, to restore his peace of mind; I will have a consultation of physicians this day, but I fear internal disease will baffle every effort of medicine.”

Mr. Douglas had scarcely left the room before Lewis entered,—a long and interesting conversation took place, the result of which was, Fidelia’s visit to her brother.—From this she derived neither hope nor comfort, his spirits were so visibly depressed, that it was impossible to urge the subject of her embassy with the earnestness she wished, and she was soon convinced that reason was vainly opposed against the feelings of the heart.

The

The physicians were consulted,—they frankly declared the case to be a hopeless one, unless some strong exertions were made by the patient himself. They could only advise change of air, and a succession of new objects to amuse the mind. Mr. Douglas was almost distracted, Fidelia overwhelmed by sorrow, and Lewis little less a sufferer than either.—Frederic was not insensible to the pain he gave, he struggled to exert himself, at times affected cheerfulness, took the air every day in the Park, round Kensington and the environs of the town, but would not hear of going into the country, tho' the town thinned very fast, and people were crowding to the watering places.

Three or four days passed this way, in none of their excursions had they again met the fatal enchantress;—his eager looks into every carriage too plainly spake his hope and desire of seeing the woman he

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both loved and detested. It was the sixth day from the one on which they had seen Eleanora in the Park, when, after a very bad night, young Douglas appeared to be so ill that his father again urged him to go to Bristol. "I will go, since you are so *very desirous of it*," answered he, "altho' I am certain I shall derive no benefit from change of place,—but yet, I will not be ungrateful for your goodness, Sir.—I am ready to attend you whenever you please, the sooner the better." Mr. Douglas waited to hear no more, but rose with alacrity to order the necessary accommodations for the invalid, purposing to set off the following day.

In the evening, about dusk, Lewis received a note, written in French, and brought by a waiter from a coffee-house, in Bond-Street, containing a gentleman's compliments to Mr. Berthier, requesting to see him for ten minutes, at the coffee-house,

house, on business of much import, and great consequence to his friend, Mr. Frederic Douglas; at the same time, he must desire this requested interview should not be mentioned to the family till his return to the Square.

The elder Mr. Douglas was from home, the young one reclining on a sofa, apparently in a doze, Fidelity had been netting by his side.—Lewis had risen softly, and stole to the stair-case to read the note by the lamp.—He asked for the bearer, who was known to the servant as one of the waiters, and who told him his employer was a respectable elderly looking gentleman.—Lewis, without hesitation, promised to follow him immediately; and fearful of disturbing Douglas, chose not to return to the room, but bade the servant, if his master or young lady should ask for him, to say he was stepped out, and should soon return.

M 2

He

He then left the house, and turned into Little-Brook-Street, well knowing the way, from having accompanied the elder Douglas to the very same coffee-house a few days before. Just as he had cleared the corner, he saw a coach drawn up against the stable wall of the corner house; and in the moment that he advanced near it he was tripped up by one man, whilst two others laid hold of him, and stopping his mouth, put him into the carriage. The whole business was so momentary, that surprise would have effectually tied his tongue had he not been impeded from speaking.—One only person was passing, who on halting was told, “it was a French gentleman they had arrested.” The passenger went on, and the coach drove rapidly off.

Lewis knew so little of the English language, that he understood nothing that was said; and to his questions in French they only laughed.—The blinds were drawn up,
and

and his hands forcibly held; and he soon perceived that the note had been a deception, and that he was waylaid to be carried off. During his residence in Florence, he had heard of frequent adventures of this kind—they were not unusual there; and being a stranger to the customs and manners of the English, he was less surprised than concerned to find himself the hero of a scheme, which he apprehended would terminate very unpleasantly, unless he should be mistaken for another person, which seemed to be a forlorn hope. The anxiety his friends would suffer, was not the least of his vexations.

The carriage drove at a great rate for some time, and when it stopped it was totally dark. He was taken from the coach and led up a gravel walk, when, having ascended a flight of steps, a bell was rung, the door opened, and he entered into a small hall, poorly lighted, just suffi-

M 3

ciently

ciently to discern the surrounding objects, Resistance he was well convinced would avail nothing, therefore when the man who opened the door desired he would follow him, pointing to the stair-case, he quietly ascended it, and attended his conductor into a very decent apartment, where lights were placed on the table. — The man reached a chair to him, bowed, and retired, locking the door outside. Lewis was by no means easy, he paced about the room for some minutes.—There was an opposite door, he tried that, it was also locked.—Presently the man returned with wine, cakes, and sweetmeats, which he placed on the table. He observed the fellows who came in the carriage stood at the door, as if to prevent any attempt at escaping, therefore he took no notice, but continued walking about until they had all withdrawn and again locked the door. “I am then a prisoner,” thought Lewis, “handsomely treated however.” He heard a key put
into

into the lock of the other door, turned round, and in the same moment beheld—Eleanora!

Surprise almost petrified him—he stood gazing on her without moving. She advanced, smiling, and took his hand,—“ My young friend, I am glad to see you in England.—What, dumb!—I flatter myself a pleasing surprise thus locks up your senses. You doubtless expected some grim tyrant man, with a dagger and a draught of poison, instead of a pretty woman and elegant refreshments. But come, descend from your altitudes, my dear Berthier, and take a glass to our happy acquaintance.” “ I am indeed overpowered by surprise,” returned he, and can scarcely believe I am awake.—For Heaven’s sake, Madam, inform me for what purpose I am forcibly brought hither?” She burst into a fit of laughing,—“ To give me the agreeable entertainment of initiating you into the pleasures of

M 4

life—

life—to raise you from the obscurity of your birth, and give you notoriety of character.—In short, for I hate circumlocution, in one word I love you!”—“Madam!” exclaimed Lewis, interrupting her, “me, love me!—Surely you *do intend* to divert yourself at my expence.”

“And what is there *præy* so incredible in the idea that I should take a fancy to you?” returned she. — “With all your peasantry and forest humility, you cannot be blind to your very handsome person.—I have long had an affection for you, and intended that boy, Frederic, for my tool; but whether from his jealousy, your foolish partiality for another, or humble opinion of yourself—whether either, or all of these causes combined I know not, but certainly you were very blind to your own interest, and kept aloof from me.” “You must pardon me,” said Lewis, “if I tell you plainly, Madam, that you were as much
above

above my regards, as I feel myself below your's;—I have no ambition to succeed my unhappy friend, who is, I fear dying, a victim to your perfidy and ungenerous conduct.—But what can be said in excuse for the horrid design you had to marry his father?—Oh! Madam, talk not of love, the word is profaned from *your* lips!”

“Indeed!” said she, rising, I perceive the meanness of your origin still holds an influence over your sentiments—you have profited little yet since your introduction into the world, and I reserve to myself the improvement in your manners and knowledge of life. In truth, my good friend,” added she, softly, and with a malicious smile, “you have much to learn; your Caroline was a simple chit that knew nothing, but I do not despair of throwing a little life into your composition, and it will be your own fault if your future destiny be not happy and enviable.”

M 5

Though

Though she endeavoured to repress her vexation, and affect a pleantry in her manner, she walked the room with a disordered air;—whilst Lewis, to whom she appeared in the most odious light, painfully affected by the name of Caroline, sat buried in reflection. After surveying him a moment in silence, she resumed her seat.—“Propitious be your silence, my dear Berthier,—you shall be my pupil, and I dare assure you that you will have a very gentle mistress;—from my instructions you will derive pleasure, and a knowledge of the world.”

“I am perfectly content in my ignorance,” returned Lewis, “I should prove a very dull and indocile scholar, therefore, Madam, as your time and attention will be entirely thrown away, permit me to return immediately to my friends.” “Do you think me such an egregious fool, thus to be baffled in my plans by a blind per-
verse

verse youth, insensible to the happiness prepared for him? No, no, Mr. Berthier, I have long liked you, and had this *very plan* in view when at Florence;—but that Austrian Count coming in my way, flattered my vanity and ambition,—and for a time they predominated over love. I came to England with him,—the admiration I obtained, and my introduction into this country, under the sanction of his name, were so gratifying, that I really forgot my handsome forester.—I was awakened from this flattering illusion, by the inconstancy of the Austrian, who presumed to question my conduct, as an excuse for his own defection.—We quarrelled—he ungenerously disposed of every thing—and suddenly left England with a famous public singer.—I was desperate and undone, except being rich in jewels.

“ I had become acquainted with that little uninformed prude, Fidelia Douglas, of course—

course with her father.—The fastidious scruples of what is called virtue, I had long despised—I think nothing infamous but poverty, and the contempt that attends it.—I had never cared for Frederic Douglas, but to have an Englishman in my train;—I hated Fidelia for her prudery.—In marrying the father, I should mortify the children, be restored to society, and have the prospect of being an English Peeress.

“ Such were *my* views, and what, *Sir*, have *you* to answer for, in rendering all my schemes abortive,—in covering me with confusion and disgrace, before creatures whom I designed to be the tools of my ambition! Do you think I did not vow revenge? I did, and still swear vengeance shall fall on that family and yourself, if you do not ward off the blow that shall crush you all.

“ Hear

“Hear me out,” cried she haughtily, perceiving Lewis about to speak.—“When I quitted the Douglas house, I flew to my Lord E. who had taken some pains to prove his admiration of me, in the short time we resided in Paris—but then I was closely attached to the Austrian;—It was only a few days before, that I heard of his arrival in England.

“He received me with rapture, offered me a splendid establishment, and settled me to the extent of my wishes.—But do not suppose that the spirit of revenge was subdued—I have kept an observant eye upon the Douglas family. Money is the great wheel that sets every engine to work,—and while I can command that, my schemes cannot fail. I soon learnt that you were in England—I contrived to see you unobserved—I perceived the simple youth, your companion, was a mere shadow of himself.”

“Yes,”

“Yes,” cried Lewis, “my unhappy friend is a victim to your perfidy and ingratitude.” “Perfidy and ingratitude,” repeated she, laughing, “fine romantic words, but of no import;—for I make no professions of constancy, and own no obligations to the man who attaches himself to me from the impulse of his passions.—But to conclude at once, I felt my former liking of you return with encreased fervor, and an accidental meeting in the Park, confirmed my resolution of having an interview with you.—Oh, how I exulted in the disorder my presence occasioned to the party!—Transient as our passing glances were, I saw the confusion I gloried in.”

“Horrid!” cried Lewis, “what effrontery,—how shameless must that woman be, who could see a family she had so cruelly injured, without sinking to the earth with shame and remorse!”

“Poor

“Poor novice!” exclaimed she, with an air of scorn, “bred in a forest, and tutored by a priest, thou hast imbibed strange obsolete notions of men, women, and manners;—and art as ignorant of the world, as the untutored savages—thy former companions.—But from me thou shalt receive lessons of information and delight.” “Stop, Madam,” said Lewis, “do not disgrace your sex, by continuing a conversation that renders you so despicable in my eyes.”

“How!” returned she, furiously, “dare you, mean, ignorant as you are, a creature in my power, thus presume to insult me! —Have a care;—*I love*, but *I can hate* also, and by every saint in the calendar, *I* vow revenge, if *you provoke that hatred* which shall crush you all. I leave you this night to consider;—love, pleasure, riches, and the enjoyment of every delight this world can afford, may be your’s in
whatever

whatever quarter of the globe you please ;— but, if blind to your interest, cold and insensible to the happiness that courts you, preferring dependence, and the society of a simple, love-sick girl, a *second Caroline*, to such pleasures—such affluence as *I* offer to bestow,—then beware of my vengeance! *I* will have more than *one* victim you may be assured; nor shall the Douglas family ever see you more.”

She quitted the room with the air and look of a tragedy princess, leaving Lewis almost rooted to the floor, equally indignant, and terrified by her menaces, which he had but too much cause to believe she was really capable of carrying into execution.

He tried the doors and windows,—all were firmly barred and bolted.—He rang the bell until it broke in his hand,—stamped,—called aloud,—in short made every

every effort to get free, or be heard;—but all his exertions were fruitless, and he was at length convinced that he must be content to pass the night in a chair, where we shall leave him to his comfortless conjectures, and look back on the friends he had so suddenly been taken from.

When the elder Douglas had returned home, after having most considerably attended to every accommodation of ease in travelling for his poor invalid, and his companion, he came into the apartment where Frederic and his sister, who had been enquiring for Lewis, were expressing their surprise at his long absence, and at a loss to guess from whom he could receive a note.

Mr. Douglas was informed of the circumstance,—it rather surprised him, but he entered on other subjects, expecting
Lewis

Lewis would soon return.—They waited near an hour beyond the usual supper time, and then feeling uneasy, Mr. Douglas sent a servant to the coffee-house to attend him home, when it suited him to return. The servant quickly came back, no such gentleman as Mr. Berthier had been there,—he had seen the waiter who brought the note, he told him, that the gentleman who employed him was at the door when he took back the answer, that himself went into the house and saw him no more.—Extremely alarmed, Mr. Douglas went over to the coffee-house, but could not gain the least intelligence further than a gentleman coming in, had asked for a glass of negus, and sent one of the waiters with a note into Hanover-Square, paid for the negus, and they saw no more of him. Mr. Douglas was compelled to return home with this unsatisfactory information, which greatly distressed the young people, and it was not without the most earnest entreaties
of

of his father that Frederic could be prevailed upon to retire to his apartment, upon the assurance that servants should be sent different ways, among the chairmen and coachmen, to procure every possible intelligence. He did retire, but he could not rest, and when the day dawned, insisted upon being dressed, to join his father and Fidelia, who had sat up the whole night; and who were extremely shocked on beholding him so early, so ill, and unrefreshed. —The journey was now stopped,—the servants returned without any satisfaction.—Mr. Douglas had made every possible enquiry, in person, and returned, with an intention to draw up an advertisement and send it to the several papers. On entering his house a letter was given him, received by the penny-post,—he opened it and read as follows:

“ Mr. Berthier, anxious to relieve the solicitude of his friends, has requested a
quondam

quandam acquaintance of the family, to inform Mr. Frederic Douglas that it is entirely out of his power to accompany *him*, having formed a subsequent engagement, to enjoy all the delights that love and beauty have prepared for him in another kingdom. He is too interestedly engaged at present to write himself, and in less than six hours will bid adieu to England, — perhaps, forever !”

“ Ungrateful, insolent boy !” exclaimed Mr. Douglas, — “ but,” checking himself, “ but, is it possible that Lewis Berthier could have dictated such a note as this ? — Surely I wrong him ! — But then, where is he, — why thus absent himself ? — That he was sent for is evident, — could he have made any acquaintance unknown to my family in this short period ? — That surely could not be, for he has never been absent ! Yet, a man, young and vigorous like him, could not be taken away without resistance; besides,

besides, perfectly a stranger, who could form such a design, and to what purpose could it tend?" Lost in conjecture, he entered the drawing-room, the letter open in his hand.—“A letter,” cried Frederic, starting up, “a letter from Lewis, Sir?” “Not *from* him, but *of* him, and very strange sort of information, I think,” said Mr. Douglas, delivering it to him.—His son eagerly cast his eyes on the writing, but before he could have perused a single line, he sank back on the sofa;—Fidelia flew to raise him, his senses were for a moment suspended, but not lost,—the drops she held to him presently restored him. “’Tis the writing of Eleanora,” said he, faintly, “I have seen only his name, pray give it to me,” for it had dropped from his hand. “Impossible!” cried Mr. Douglas, “he cannot be such a villain as that note speaks him, if it is her hand!”—“If,” repeated Frederic, “alas! I know it too well,—I must read it.”—
“Yes,

“ Yes, read it, my son, and learn to despise and detest such ingrates, equally infamous and deceptive.”

The young man did read it, then clasping his hands, “ I have been the dupe of a low-born sentimental scoundrel, and the vilest of women,—I was, long ago, told of her partiality for him, ’tis now confirmed.—O! that I could tear out his false heart!” He then fell into the most violent ravings, which ended in fainting fits, that brought him to the verge of the grave, and terrified the family exceedingly. Physicians were sent for, who saw that a sudden and violent emotion might possibly have a fatal effect, without some great effort of nature to struggle against the disorder of the mind, and rouse him from that extreme debility which overpowered his weak frame. Mr. Douglas execrated the infamous Eleanora, and the ungrateful Lewis, Fidelity knelt by the bedside of her brother, the image of grief

grief and despair, when suddenly her father exclaimed, "I will go to Lord E's. enquire for that woman, and learn where she resides;—I will see them both, wretches as they are,—I will see the murderers of my son!" He darted down stairs, and was out of the house before Fidelia had time to recover herself, and endeavour to prevent him, and the terror of what might be the consequence of such an interview, agonized her beyond all description.

In this state she was found by her father on his return; and the poor man was shocked by the apprehension that he should lose both his children. But his presence afforded her some relief; though but little *satisfaction* was obtained by the result of his enquiries. — "Lord E. was gone to Newmarket, and was not expected back for several days."—From the porter he obtained the address of Eleanora, through the irresistible eloquence of gold; and on application

application to *her porter*, was informed, "his lady had left town for a few days with a young French gentleman, a *relation* of her's; but to what part of the country they were gone no one in the house knew, nor on what day they would return."—Mr. Douglas asked what kind of a person the French gentleman had; he was answered, "the servants in the house had never seen him—he was he believed but lately come to England—and Sebastian, his lady's Italian servant, said they were to take him up in Bond-Street, by his appointment, the preceding evening; but how far they went, or where they were going to, he knew nothing more than it was on a visit to a lady."

Such information, which seemed to confirm the deceit and ingratitude of Lewis, and the profligacy of a vile woman, only tended to distress them, in their fears for the effects it might have on young Douglas; and

and both concluded it would for the present be better to leave him in doubt, till he had recovered from the shock already so overwhelming. Mr. Douglas could no longer resist conviction, he said; that Berthier was a hypocritical deceiver, he had no doubt.—There could be no palliation that could extenuate his crime against the peace of a family who loved and trusted him—all that could be urged was, that he had fallen into the snares of a beautiful wicked woman, and had sacrificed his honour and integrity to the gratification of his passions. Fidelia, indeed, when she reflected on the character given of him by Hermine, by Father Francis, and the whole tenor of his conduct towards her brother, with the detestation he had expressed for Eleanora, could not reconcile the present appearance of things.—She *still doubted, still hoped* Lewis might be one day exonerated from the heavy charges against him; whilst she trembled, lest the attractive loveliness of

Eleanora, and her insidious arts, should have triumphed over the reason and honour of an inexperienced youth.

It was in vain both the father and the daughter united their efforts to console poor Frederic, to rouse his pride, and stimulate him to despise such unworthy beings as were beneath even his resentment; that fatal passion had taken such deep root, had so entwined itself about his heart, that a weak, debilitated constitution, ruined by early excesses, was unable to contend with. He had been for some time declining, and endeavoured to struggle with his disorder, and conceal the anguish of his heart. The infamous design upon his father he hoped would destroy the influence of Eleanora, but the first moment he beheld her again, he was fatally convinced of his own weakness, and her unbounded power.

This

This last stroke, the letter written by her so basely insulting, and the idea that she had always preferred Lewis, and that the deceitful, ungrateful youth had imposed upon his credulity, and had sacrificed him and his family to the gratification of their mutual inclinations—all these painful reflections on his wrongs, and their baseness, were too overwhelming for a weak mind and a broken constitution to support; and his distracted father beheld him sinking into the grave, an early victim to a neglected education, improper indulgencies, and the fatal contagion of vicious example.

Mr. Douglas, too late convinced of his own irretrievable error, in consigning the education of his son to a man whose moral character he had not been solicitous to develop, of whose principles he had not taken the trouble to be assured, but blindly resigning a trust so sacred into the hands of his wife, who had proved a most un-

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worthy

worthy delegate, merely because he was too careless to enter on the duties becoming a father and a husband, now in the premature decline of a promising young man, felt the most poignant self-reproach, the most acute sorrow, when, alas! both were fruitless and unavailing.

Not to be prolix on this melancholy subject, we shall only add, that in eight days from the disappearance of Lewis, poor Frederic Douglas resigned all *his* worldly prospects, without expressing the smallest regret at his early summons to the grave, and died with a composure that edified all about him. He forgave the "Wretched Eleanora, for wretched she must be," said he, "when on the bed of death, though I earnestly hope, repentant of her crimes. If Lewis is guilty, as appearances bespeak him, may Heaven pardon *his errors*, as I forgive his ingratitude; but if hereafter it should be proved he is innocent of intention,

tion, and the victim to a moment of artful fascination, tell him he possessed my esteem and regard, and that I earnestly pray for his future happiness."

His address to his father and sister was truly affecting; and proved, that with a cultivated education, in the hands of a worthy man, and stimulated by good examples, he might have lived an ornament to society and a blessing to his family.— We shall pass over the afflictive scenes that ensued between the father and the daughter, who in a few days after the funeral left town on a visit to Lord Douglas for a fortnight; by which time Fidelia hoped for the consoling presence of her friend Hermine, Lady Somerset being shortly expected in England from the last accounts.

It is now high time we should look back on our poor peasant, whom we left a prisoner, though in a comfortable apartment,

N 3

and

and with plenty of refreshments before him; of which neither Eleanora nor him had tasted, from the disagreement between them. When Lewis found he was to pass the night in confinement, he had sense enough to know that to give himself up to fruitless grief and vexation would be extreme folly; and that he ought rather to call up his fortitude and resolution to overcome the blandishments of vice in a form so alluring, and courage to disregard her menaces and future proceedings whatever they might be. He therefore eat some fruit and cakes, drank two glasses of wine, and strove to compose himself to rest; but his uneasy reflections on the strange conjectures to his disadvantage which would naturally be made by the Douglas family, and the pain he felt for the unpromising state of Frederic's health, altogether crowded upon his mind, and precluded sleep, whilst he courted it in vain.

The

The appearance of the following day seemed to be in unison with the situation of Lewis, dark, lowering, and threatening a storm. It was not yet eight o'clock by his watch, when he heard the door unbolted and unlocked, and Eleanora entered in a most elegant morning dress, assuming an air of tenderness, and a bewitching softness in her voice and address. She began lamenting his want of gallantry, and even common civility, so cruelly to repulse and upbraid a woman whose passion was not the transient inclination of a day, but who had long loved him—one who was willing to give up Lord E. and all mankind to live with him alone, and share that fortune with him which the love and prodigality of others had bestowed on her.—He should chuse his own residence, in whatever quarter of the globe he might wish to live, with transport she would accompany him, and own no power but almighty love—seek no society but that of

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the

the man she adored. "In fine," added she, assuming a shew of modesty, though she had it not, and looking alternately on the floor, and raising her eyes slowly to his face, "in fine, my dear Berthier, I will ingenuously confess, that you are the only man that ever touched my heart; and when I offer to sacrifice all others to you, 'tis to obey the impulse of that heart that beats for you alone."

What shall we say of Berthier at the conclusion of this fine harangue, which had every thing to recommend it, but truth and genuine modesty?—Shall we say that he was very young, very ignorant of the world, very susceptible,—and—half asleep?—Shall we add that the object before him was truly beautiful, fascinating, an enchantress, who looked but to conquer, and might command by her smiles the first situation in the kingdom?—All this granted, for it was but too true, alas! what was to become

become of our simple forester?—He at first averted his eyes, he stole a transient glance, then felt his heart flutter, then a dose of flattery was swallowed with something like exultation;—then again honour, a proper contempt, Frederic Douglas, Fidelia, and, oh! Hermine!—Hermine! who relied on his honour and integrity.—Once he had already forfeited his claim to her esteem, had sank under the weakness of his heart;—but Caroline, *she* was amiable—this woman a dangerous syren, a shining serpent, whose wily arts ensnared the unwary into her folds to sting them mortally, to ruin, and death.

“ Propitious be your silence, dear Berthier,” said she, observing the conflict in his mind, “ let not fastidious fancies, obsolete and unknown in this enlightened age, or absurd prepossessions, weigh in your mind against the advantages I offer of love and independence. Happiness, affluence,

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and

and a tender heart, are thrown into your hands ;—do not hesitate, do not reject that heart so vainly sought for, that flies of itself to lodge in your bosom.” Lewis trembled, he could bear no more, he must exert himself now—another moment it might be too late. “ Stop, Madam,—if possible respect yourself.—I can accept no gift from your hands; contempt for your principles, and scorn of your power, are the feelings of *my heart*, and beautiful as you are I reject the offer of your’s with my whole soul.”

“ Cold, senseless, insolent wretch !” exclaimed she, in a furious tone, all the deluding softness she had assumed giving way to the natural violence of her character,—“ that power you scorn, you shall feel till your mean soul is humbled at my feet ;—then will I spurn a base reptile that dares to insult a woman, who for a moment has levelled herself to forget her own dignity, and seek alliance with a heart as impenetrable

trable as the rugged trees in his native forest." She walked the room, swelling with rage, for some moments,—then, as if recollecting herself, she once again approached him with a melancholy softness, that, had it preceded her passion, might have been dangerous,—it was now too late, the fiend had appeared too evident in her countenance and manner, and so forcibly stamp'd the vileness of her character on the mind of Lewis, that all her blandishments could not erase the impression of her former vices and her present baseness.

His countenance spake the genuine feelings of his heart,—scorn and dislike wanted no words to convey their meaning more expressively than when his eyes met her's;—she was not slow in comprehending their force. Again she stamp'd with rage, and uttered the most shocking imprecations, till exhausted, she sank into a chair almost suffocated with passion. "This violence,
Madam,

Madam, is unworthy of the female character,—I entreat you to reflect and change your resolution,—let me depart from hence; I solemnly pledge my honour, if you require it, that your name shall not be implicated in the account ——.” “*Your honour!*” exclaimed she, contemptuously, “the honour of a *forester*,—a *wood-cutter*, a simple low-born peasant! — *Honour*, indeed!” “And why not, Madam,—why should a low-born peasant be denied those innate feelings which the God of nature implants in the bosom of every rational being, whether in a court or in a forest!” “No more, no more,” said she, imperiously, “this stale moralizing may qualify you for a capuchin,—for a monk, or a confessor; but will be very unprofitable in the world. Once more, though I could tear my flesh for the meanness I am guilty of, once more I demand (remember this is the crisis of your fate), will you voluntarily attach yourself to me, and accept that independence,—

pendence, — that freedom of mind and action, so dear to every soul that possesses one spark of animation and love of liberty, unless the mind is as groveling as his birth is obscure?" "Spare yourself any further humiliation, Madam," said Lewis, interrupting her, "it pains me to hear even you thus forget the respect due to your sex, and degrade the female character by language and sentiments so unworthy of a woman. In one word, 'tis a love of freedom, a desire to possess independence; and a resolution that my conduct shall not *sink me below* the meanness of my birth, that impels me to assure you I never will,—never can be attached to a woman I utterly despise."

Rage had for a moment impeded words, but it only increased the violence of the storm when it found utterance. She loaded him with execrations, declared she now hated more than she had ever loved, but
her

her revenge should be gratified, and he should dearly repent of his insolence and ingratitude. She then left him, and her first step was to write that note Mr. Douglas had received, with a double view to mischief—to impress the family with an idea of the perfidy and ingratitude of Lewis, and thus deprive him of his only friends,—and also to give pain and jealousy to Frederic Douglas, of whose strong attachment to her she was well convinced, by his appearance, and emotions, too visible when they met. Eleanora well knew the mighty power that money would give her in all countries; and though abandoned and vicious in the extreme, she was no less rapacious and avaricious—she plundered her lovers without mercy. Several had sacrificed their fortunes at the shrine of her beauty, before she became known to Frederic Douglas;—and those infamous men, Benito and his companion, were her tools

or

or jackalls, to watch for fresh victims to be enslaved by her all-subduing charms.

Douglas had not the means to gratify her boundless avarice, though he deeply involved himself by the connexion; but she was pleased to have a young Englishman in her train, and most certainly did from their first acquaintance, prefer Lewis to any man she had ever seen, and was contriving schemes to entrap him, when the Austrian nobleman interposed, and turned the scale by the lure of riches and ambition she had not resolution to withstand. Thoroughly disgusted by her boundless rapacity, her conduct, and infidelity, he had taken a sudden leave of her, and secured all the property which had escaped her hands; — but she was far from being left in the manner she had described to the elder Douglas, and it was a sudden thought — the impulse of the moment, to gain admission into his house, with the view to become

become his wife, that she might attain the rank of an English Peeress, (hearing that the death of Lord Douglas was daily expected,) and enjoy the exquisite pleasure of astonishing and mortifying Frederic and his innocent sister, to whom she had lately taken a strong aversion, because she was very generally admired, and by the propriety of her conduct, seemed to reproach, as well as to dislike the freedom of *her manners*;—for Fidelia's coldness, and scrutinizing looks, had not passed unnoticed, and had greatly offended her.

As to her former knowledge of Frederic, the great licentiousness of her principles made her outstep every consideration of religion,—every sacred obligation imposed by duty and conscience;—therefore when defeated in this nefarious scheme no wonder that in such a mind as her's, revenge, and a renewed predilection for Lewis, stimulated her to the vilest atrocities.

cities. She had emissaries and persons in her knowledge, fit to conduct her schemes; the house in which Lewis was confined had been taken long before, when she first came to England, as a private retreat.—It was detached out of a public road, a small distance from an obscure village; — and tho' decent, and surrounded by a large garden, had nothing in its appearance to excite much notice or curiosity.

Here she had only Italian servants, except an old woman—a sort of house-keeper. But one of her servants regularly went to town daily, for every necessary wanted in the house, and the woman had little to do with any of them. In this house she could confine Lewis as effectually as if in a prison.—When he was in the carriage and incapable of resistance, his pockets had been searched and emptied; she knew no bribes were in his power, nor had he a single acquaintance, (as she thought,) in England;
but

but the Douglas family, and from them she could well secure him. She had previously instructed her servants in town, not as a secret, but openly mentioning her intention of leaving town with a young French gentleman, not doubting but the letter she should write, would lead his friends to make enquiry at her house.

Thus her plan well laid, the whole time that my Lord E. was at Newmarket, attending the races, she kept guard on Lewis herself, still trusting that every fresh day would produce a change in his sentiments. He was allowed no bed, and but a scanty portion of provisions;—but after the first two nights, habit reconciled him to sleep in an arm chair, and as his appetite was far from being keen, was very easily satisfied. All he wanted was air and liberty, but he thought it was impossible she could long persevere in keeping him a prisoner, confined to the range of only two small rooms.

Both

Both were well secured, and whenever they were opened, three men came together, two guarding the door with pistols.

“This farce,” thought he, “cannot last, she will be tired of the fruitless expence.” His detestation of her daily increased, and every visit she made him, also magnified her rage and disappointment. Lewis would often reflect with astonishment on her conduct and character. He could scarcely believe it possible that a woman should be so utterly abandoned,—so lost to virtue, principle, and shame. He knew not to what a dreadful gradation in vice a female may arrive, when religion and honour have ceased to hold their dominion over her mind.—No woman plunges at once into guilt and shame,—vice is progressive, and if not timely checked by regret and repentance, it acquires boldness from habit, and every good principle is lost forever.

Eleanora,

Eleanora, tormented by love, tortured by disappointment, and stimulated by anger and vengeance, determined to complete her work by depriving Lewis of every possible hope of being again received by Mr. Douglas. She went to town with a view of dropping another incendiary letter into the penny-post,—she called at her house, and while she was waiting the return of a servant she had sent on a message, she took up a newspaper just brought, and tho' by no means conversant with the English language, she tried to amuse herself.—Almost the first paragraph that met her eye was an account of poor Frederic's death, with a general regret at his premature fate. A momentary pang shot through her heart, for tho' she had heard and saw that he appeared to be declining, she had no idea of his immediate danger; and, at the moment, felt as if conscious she had accelerated his death. He had in no shape offended her, to him she had been ever perfectly indifferent,

ferent, and all her spleen against him arose from believing that it was at his request Berthier had written to the elder Douglas, and prevented her intended marriage.—Vile as she was, she yet did feel some little compunction at this fatal event, but she soon shook it off, in the triumph she should have over the feelings of Lewis.

She was just preparing to return in this charitable disposition, when surprised by the abrupt entrance of Lord E. whom she supposed to be safe in the country. He had seen her carriage at the door, and concluded she was going to air, or make a tour through the shops, to try the patience of the tradesmen. “My dear Countess,” said he, (for she chose to retain her title, tho’ the Count had disclaimed her right to it,) after affectionately saluting her, “my charming Eleanora, by Heavens you look quite angelic!—How could I forego my own happiness by stopping so long in that
d——’d

it——'d place, where I have lost all my money, and ready cash at my banker's?—I want six hundred pounds, my dear creature, immediately; I will replace it in a few days, with good interest, my love,—but my honour is at stake, and I must have it without delay.” “Six hundred pounds!” exclaimed she, displeased at his return, and still more so with his request, “where do you suppose I can have such a sum to supply you?” “Nay, my dear Eleanora,” returned he, “surely you cannot be at a loss for such a trifle;—you know I presented you with an order for a brace of thousands when you did me the honour of claiming my protection,—and, not a fortnight since, I tossed you in another thousand, when I won fifteen hundred from the Duke of ***?”

“Well,” said she, interrupting him, “and suppose you did;—can you think I keep money to look at?—Bless your wise head!—

head! — Why those thousands have travelled half over the town by this time;—and, but this very day, had you not so unexpectedly returned, I should have written to you for a fresh supply.” —“Nay, nay, Eleanora, don’t trifle with me, I am really confoundedly in want of the money, and cannot do without it.” “Nor can I, I give you my word,—therefore, if you have none at your banker’s, write to your steward, let him grub up some of your old oaks, put them on sale, and send us up a half score of thousands directly.” “Upon my word, *Madam*, I am not in a humour to carry on the jest,—I know you can command more money than I ask you to lend me.” “And, if I could, *Sir*, am I to beggar myself to supply your extravagance? Pray apply to your steward, there is no other method of raising it.” “I have not time,” answered he, “and since you ungratefully deny to oblige me, I must instantly go to some d——’d money lender, and

and I would much rather have given you the interest than pay it to such fellows."

He was flinging out of the room in a violent pet, when she cried out, "Stop, stop, my Lord;—suppose that I should distress myself, and disappoint a tradesman to whom I have promised payment this very day, what interest did you mean to offer me?" "My lovely girl," answered he, in a softened voice, though inwardly cursing her avarice, "if you can let me have the six hundred, I will give you a bond for a thousand payable in a month, as by that time my steward will be in cash for me from rents."

"Well, send for a bond, then, to be filled up;—I know I shall be insulted for disappointing the man, and greatly distressed for running expences, in thus giving up all the money I can command;—but I cannot bear to see you thus harassed,

ressed, my dear Lord." He believed as much as he pleased of this fine romance, and knew how to appreciate her love and generosity. But whilst he despised her art and meanness, he was gratified in his vanity as the avowed protector of a woman so beautiful, and she had attractions sufficiently powerful in his opinion to varnish over the depravity of her mind.

The money affair was soon settled, and after many endearing epithets, he was on the point of leaving her, when she asked, "Do you return immediately to Newmarket?" "To Newmarket!—no, what the devil should I do there, the races are over. I was much entreated by Earl Belfont to make him a visit for a few weeks, but I languished to return to my angelic Countess, therefore refused him." "But positively you shall go," returned she, "I will not be a drawback upon your pleasures; no, my dear Lord, your Eleanora
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shall not be cursed by your friends, as the fond and ill-natured devil who deprives them of your society. I love *your* pleasure better than *my own*;—*I insist* upon your going this very day, and when you have gratified your friends and companions with a few weeks, you will return with double rapture to your Eleanora.”

“ But how can you drag on your days without society, were I really to go, which I have no inclination to do?” “ I will study English,” answered she, “ read, improve my language and taste, and I have a friend at Richmond who is dying to have me with her, I can visit her;—and feeling that my self-denial must be productive of amusement to my loved E. I can never be uncomfortable myself.”

O, man! proud of thy imagined strength and superior wisdom, how easily art thou duped by an artful woman!—’Tis the timid,

mid, elegant, and ingenuous mind, over which those boasted lords of the creation meanly triumph, because there is no resistance; but place them in the power of an abandoned mistress, and they become the veriest slaves in nature—submit to the most flagrant impositions, the most injurious treatment—and but too often return to their home, and revenge on an amiable, unoffending wife, the insults they have borne from a vile, infamous woman.

Lord E. not ten minutes before had mentally cursed the impudent, avaricious, mean-souled Eleanora—her character was abandoned, her conduct and principles notoriously profligate—nay he even now suspected she had some sinister design to pursue in his absence;—yet with his eyes open, and conviction in his heart, he suffered himself to be fascinated by her flattery and pretended affection.—Soft words from those beautiful lips were irresistible,

O 2

and

and after a number of tender caresses, he consented to tear himself from her the *following day*, that his charming Countess might escape the illiberal reflections of those who were ignorant of her transcendant worth and generosity.

His charming Countess would have been much better pleased had his departure taken place immediately, but she was too politic to press it; she therefore hastened him off to pay his debts of honour, whilst she seized the opportunity of writing a note to her confidential servant to take proper care of Lewis.

The following day Lord E. bade a reluctant adieu, engaging for his return within *ten days*, and in less than *ten minutes* after, his affectionate and faithful Lady was on the road, flying to see her prisoner. In the evening previous to her return, a fever which had slowly crept upon Lewis, occasioned

sioned by want of air, exercise, and proper rest, began to wear a serious appearance from the disorder of his head. His attendant observed in the morning, that he seemed to be very ill, but expecting his Lady every moment, did not notice to him the alteration he could not but see; and the moment her carriage drove into the yard, he made his report in terms that alarmed and shocked her greatly. She flew to his apartment, but when she beheld him reclining in his chair, for the first time in her life her heart was smote with anguish, and something very like remorse, —she actually burst into tears!

He raised his throbbing head. “Dear, dear Berthier!” exclaimed she, “you are very ill.” “I am, indeed,” he faintly replied, “my head is very bad, and I am parched with thirst.” She rang the bell, —lemonade was ordered,—and a bed to be got ready without delay.—She was nearly
distracted,—

distracted,—cursed Lord E. for having detained her in town, and acted a thousand extravagancies. Lewis, a little revived by drinking, besought her to be composed, for he was really moved by the agony she was in, and said, “He should soon get better if he had a bed to repose in.” “Oh! Berthier,” cried she passionately, “you must hate me for my cruelty,—why, why have you provoked me to treat you so contrary to my heart? I have been to blame—for Heaven’s sake get well, or I shall be distracted.” He was soon after conveyed to another apartment, and placed in bed.—She fell on her knees,—“I am miserable,—I cannot live without you.—Without assistance you may expire, and if I send for a medical gentleman I am lost forever,—you will betray me,—you will claim his good offices,—you will expose me to the Douglas family. Yet that’s a trifle,—you will leave—hate, and renounce me! What—what can I do?”

“Make

“ Make yourself easy,” answered he, “ my life is of consequence to no one,—destitute of friends, connexions, or a place of residence.—One gentle heart *alone*, may heave a sigh for my fate, but she must believe me worthless.—Oh, Hermine!”

“ Hermine!” cried she, starting from the floor, Hermine!—who—what is she?”—
“ An angel,” replied he, faintly, and then aloud, with a strong exertion, he added, “ go, go, do me justice,—tell her that tho’ unworthy of her confidence, I have stopt short of profligacy;—tell her she is above my hopes, but I adore—I die for her!—Go, go, pray go; or she will hate me!”

No language can pourtray the surprise and agony that overwhelmed Eleanora. She had dreaded the charms of Fidelia, but *here* was a secret discovered—a dangerous—beloved rival whom she knew not, and whose fatal influence had no doubt, made
him

him cold and insensible to her beauty, and superior to all the temptations of love and independance.

She stood for some moments immovable, until he again raved about Hermine, Douglas, and Lady Somerset.— She could make nothing of these unconnected exclamations, and hesitated if she should let him perish, or send for assistance. To save his life for another woman was death to her hopes,—to let him die in the bloom of youth a sacrifice to her disappointed desires, was an idea she shuddered at. Divided between love and revenge, she sunk back in a chair, when a second incoherent speech caused her to start, and in the same moment the door was thrown open, and my Lord E. stalked sullenly into the room, looking alternately at her, and at the bed.

END OF VOL. III.



MORBURY, PRINTER, BRENTFORD.









